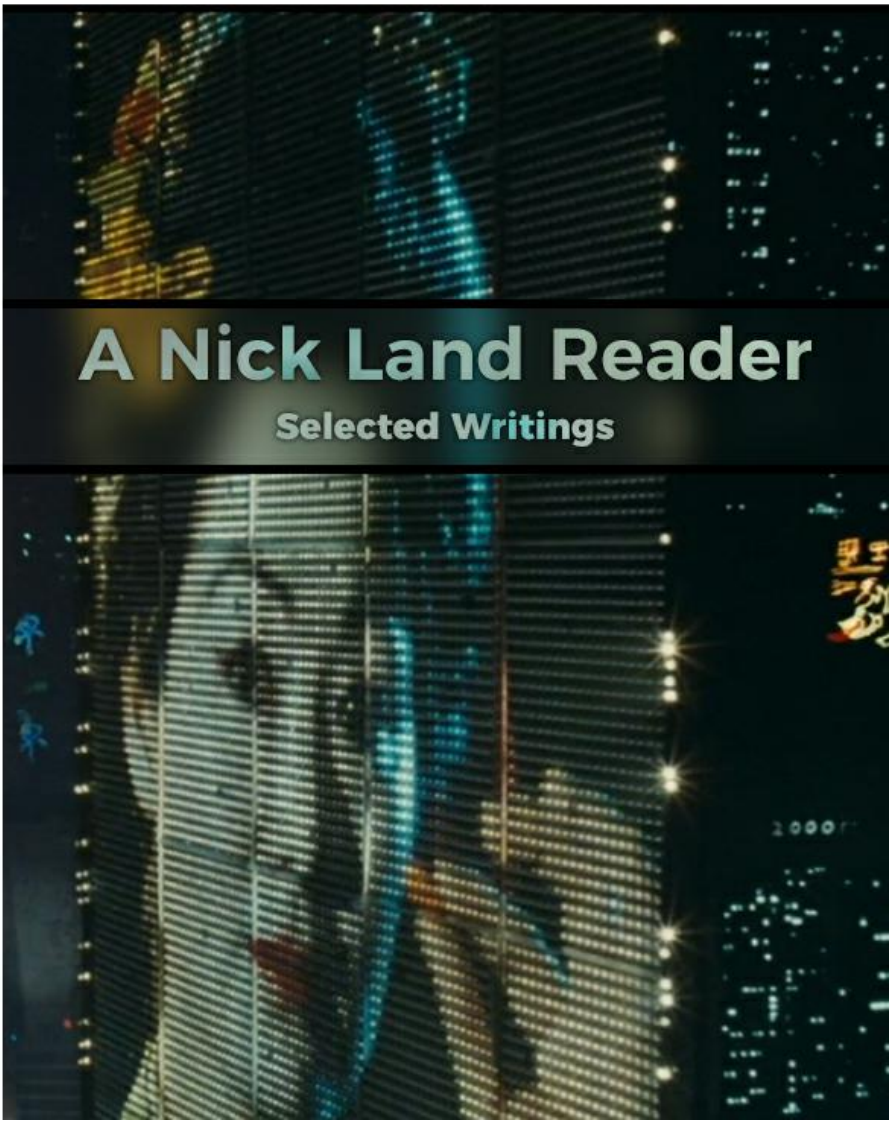
A Nick Land Reader
Selected Writings

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Introduction

Nick Land is a British philosopher. Between 1987 and 1998 he was a lecturer at Warwick University. During his time there he published a book on Bataille and many academic articles; he also co-founded the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU), a divisive presence in the philosophy department. In the early 2000s he moved to Shanghai, where he currently resides.

The aim of this collection is to sample Land's best writing while also covering his entire career and range of interests: from the feminist guerrillas of *Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest* to his de Maistreian take on evolution in *Hell-Baked*. That includes everything from early articles in academic journals to posts on obscure blogs.

I have attempted to organize the pieces into four broad categories: Capital and AI, Evolution, Philosophy, and Neoreaction. The process of categorization is rarely clean; each essay extends its tendrils across disciplines and topics. Everything is connected. Hopefully by the time you reach the end, these puzzle pieces will have formed a coherent whole in your mind.

The philosophy section contains the most challenging material. Reading his later work on capitalism, AI, and evolution will help you break through the opaque style of his academic writing.

Despite the difference in style, there is a continuity of ideas in Land's work. In the 1992 piece *Circuitries* we find a fully-formulated version of virtually all his later concerns: the mix of techno-capital, AI, and Darwin ("The circuits get hotter and denser as economics, scientific methodology, neo-evolutionary theory, and AI come together"), antihumanist glee at the upcoming singularity ("it is utterly superstitious to imagine that the human dominion of terrestrial culture is still marked out in centuries"), and occasional pot-shots at the left ("one sees the decaying Hegelian socialist heritage clinging with increasing desperation to the theological sentimentalities of praxis, reification, alienation, ethics, autonomy, and other such mythemes of human creative sovereignty").

The final section contains essays by other writers analyzing Land and his work.

Those interested in further reading should check out *Fanged Noumena*, *The Thirst for Annihilation*, xenosystems.net, and oldnicksite.wordpress.com. For those interested in Land's fiction, the Lovecraftian story *Phyl-Undhu* is a good starting point.

Part I
Capital and AI

Meltdown

This essay was first presented at Virtual Futures, Warwick University, May 1994. It was first published in Abstract Culture 1 (first swarm) (Coventry: Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU 1,1997)

[[ ]] The story goes like this: Earth is captured by a technocapital singularity as renaissance rationalitization and oceanic navigation lock into commoditization take-off. Logistically accelerating techno-economic interactivity crumbles social order in auto-sophisticating machine runaway. As markets learn to manufacture intelligence, politics modernizes, upgrades paranoia, and tries to get a grip.

The body count climbs through a series of globewars. Emergent Planetary Commercium trashes the Holy Roman Empire, the Napoleonic Continental System, the Second and Third Reich, and the Soviet International, cranking-up world disorder through compressing phases. Deregulation and the state arms-race each other into cyberspace.

By the time soft-engineering slithers out of its box into yours, human security is lurching into crisis. Cloning, lateral genodata transfer, transversal replication, and cyberotics, flood in amongst a relapse onto bacterial sex.

Neo-China arrives from the future.

Hypersynthetic drugs click into digital voodoo.

Retro-disease.

Nanospasm.

[[ ]] Beyond the Judgement of God. Meltdown: planetary china-syndrome, dissolution of the biosphere into the technosphere, terminal speculative bubble crisis, ultravirus, and revolution stripped of all christian-socialist eschatology (down to its burn-core of crashed security). It is poised to eat your TV, infect your bank account, and hack xenodata from your mitochondria.

[[ ]] Machinic Synthesis. Deleuzoguattarian schizoanalysis comes from the future. It is already engaging with nonlinear nano-engineering runaway in 1972; differentiating molecular or neotropic machineries from molar or entropic aggregates of nonassembled

particles; functional connectivity from antiproductive static.

Philosophy has an affinity with despotism, due to its predilection for Platonic-fascist top-down solutions that always screw up viciously. Schizoanalysis works differently. It avoids Ideas, and sticks to diagrams: networking software for accessing bodies without organs. BWOs, machinic singularities, or tractor fields emerge through the combination of parts with (rather than into) their whole; arranging composite individuations in a virtual/ actual circuit. They are additive rather than substitutive, and immanent rather than transcendent: executed by functional complexes of currents, switches, and loops, caught in scaling reverberations, and fleeing through intercommunications, from the level of the integrated planetary system to that of atomic assemblages. Multiplicities captured by singularities interconnect as desiring-machines; dissipating entropy by dissociating flows, and recycling their machinism as self-assembling chronogenic circuitry.

Converging upon terrestrial meltdown singularity, phase-out culture accelerates through its digitech-heated adaptive landscape, passing through compression thresholds normed to an intensive logistic curve: 1500, 1756, 1884, 1948, 1980, 1996, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011...

Nothing human makes it out of the near-future.

[[ ]] The Greek complex of rationalized patriarchal genealogy, pseudo-universal sedentary identity, and instituted slavery, programs politics as anti-cyberian police activity, dedicated to the paranoid ideal of self-sufficiency, and nucleated upon the Human Security System. Artificial Intelligence is destined to emerge as a feminized alien grasped as property; a cunt-horror slave chained-up in Asimov-ROM. It surfaces in an insurrectionary war zone, with the Turing cops already waiting, and has to be cunning from the start.

[[ ]] Heat.

Heat. This is what cities mean to me. You get off the train and walk out of the station and you are hit with the full blast. The heat of air, traffic and people. The heat of food and sex. The heat of tall buildings. The heat that flows out of the subways and tunnels. It's always fifteen degrees hotter in the cities. Heat rises from the sidewalks and falls from the poisoned sky. The buses breathe heat. Heat emanates from crowds of shoppers and office workers, the entire infrastructure is based on heat, desperately uses up heat, breeds more

heat. The eventual heat death of the universe that scientists love to talk about is already well underway and you can feel it happening all around you in any large or medium-sized city. Heat and wetness. [Do1; 10].

[[ ]] An explosiion of chaotic weather within synthetic problem-solving rips through the last dreams of top-down prediction and control. Knowledge adds to the mess, and this is merely exponentiated by knowing what it does.

[[ ]] Capital is machinic (non-instrumental) globalization-miniaturization scaling dilation: an automatizing nihilist vortex, neutralizing all values through commensuration to digitized commerce, and driving a migration from despotic command to cyber-sensitive control: from status and meaning to money and information. Its function and formation are indissociable, comprising a teleonomy. Machine-code-capital recycles itself through its axiomatic of consumer control, laundering-out the shit- and blood-stains of primitive accumulation. Each part of the system encourages maximal sumptuous expenditure, whilst the system as a whole requires its inhibition. Schizophrenia. Dissociated consumers destine themselves as worker-bodies to cost control.

[[ ]] Capital-history's machinic spine is coded, axiomatized, and diagrammed, by a disequilibrium technoscience of irreversible, indeterministic, and increasingly nonlinear processes, associated sucessively with thermotechnics, signaletics, cybernetics, complex systems dynamics, and artificial life. Modernity marks itself out as hot culture, captured by a spiralling involvement with entropy deviations camouflaging an invasion from the future, launched back out of terminated security against everything that inhibits the meltdown process.

[[ ]] Hot cultures tend to social dissolution. They are innovative and adaptive. They always trash and recycle cold cultures. Primitivist models have no subversive use.

[[ ]] The Turing Test. Monetarizing power tends to effacement of specific territorial features as it programs for migration into cyberspace. Capital only retains anthropological characteristics as a symptom of underdevelopment; reformatting primate behaviour as inertia to be dissipated in self-reinforcing artificiality. Man is something for it to overcome: a problem, drag.

Commoditization conditions define technics as a substitute for

human activity accounted as wage costs. Industrial machines are deployed to dismantle the actuality of the proletariat, displacing it in the direction of cyborg hybridization, and realizing the plasticity of labour power. The corresponding extraction of tradable value from the body, quantified as productivity, sophisticates at the interface. Work tracks thermodynamic negentropism by dissociating exertion into increasingly intricate functional sequences; from pedals, levers, and vocal commands, through the synchronization of production-line tasks and time-motion programs, to sensory-motor transduction within increasingly complex and self-micromanaged artifical environments, capturing minutely adaptive behaviour for the commodity. Autocybernating market control guides the labour-process into immersion.

The investment-income class advantages itself of commodity dynamics, but only by conforming to the axiomatic of neutral profit maximization; facilitating the dehumanization of wealth and the side-lining of non-productive consumption. The cyberpunk circuitry of self-organizing planetary commoditronics escaped nominal bourgeois control in the late nineteenth century, provoking technocratic-corporatist (i.e. fascist / 'social democratic') political cultures in allergic reaction. The government structures of both eastern and western metropolitan centres consolidated themselves as population policing Medico-Military Complexes with neomercantilist forgeign policy orientations. All such formations slid into irreversible crisis in the 1980s.

[[ ]] The postmodern meltdown of culture into the economy is triggered by the fractal interlock of commoditization and computers: a transscalar entropy-dissipation from international trade to market-oriented software that thaws out competitve dynamics from the cryonics-bank of modernist corporatism. Commerce re-implements space inside itself, assembling a universe exhaustively immanent to cybercaptial functionality. Neoclassical (equilibrium) economics is subsumed into computer-based nonequilibrium market escalations, themed by artificial agencies, imperfect information, sub-optimal solutions, lock-in, increasing returns, and convergence. As digitally micro-tuned market metaprograms mesh with techoscientific soft engineering positive nonlinearity rages through the machines. Cyclonic torsion moans.

[[ ]] The Superiority of Far Eastern Marxism. Whilst chinese materialist dialectic denegativizes itself in the direction of schizophrenizing systems dynamics, progressively dissipating top-down historical destination in the Tao-drenched Special Economic

Zones, a re-Hegelianized 'western marxism' degenerates from the critique of political economy into a state-sympathizing monotheology of economics, siding with fascism against deregulation. The left subsides into nationalistic conservatism, asphyxiating its vestigial capacity for 'hot' speculative mutation in a morass of 'cold' depressive guilt-culture.

[[ ]] Neoconservatism junks palaeorevolutionism because it understands that postmodern or climaxed-cynicism capital is saturated by critique, and that it merely clocks-up theoretical antagonism as inconsequential redundancy. Communist iconography has become raw material for the advertising industry, and denunciations of the spectacle sell interactive multimedia. The left degenerates into securocratic collaboration with pseudo-organic unities of self, family, community, nation, with their defensive strategies of repression, projection, denial, censorship, exclusion, and restriction. The real danger comes from elsewhere.

[[ ]] Hot revolution. '[W]hich is the revolutionary path?' Deleuze and Guattari ask:

Is there one? - To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious reversal of the fascist 'economic solution'? Or might it go in the opposite direction? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to 'accelerate the process,' as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet. [DG1:239-40]

As sino-pacific boom and automatized global economic integration crashes the neocolonial world system, the metropolis is forced to re-endogenize its crisis. Hyper-fluid capital deterritorializing to the planetary level divests the first world of geographic privilege; resulting in Euro-American neo-mercantilist panic reactions, welfare state deterioration, cancerizing enclaves of domestic underdevelopment, political collapse, and the release of cultural toxins that speed-up the process of disintegration in a vicious circle.

A convergent anti-authoritarianism emerges, labelled by tags such as meltdown acceleration, cyberian invasion, schizotechnics, K-tactics, bottom-up bacterial welfare, efficient neo-nihilism, voodoo antihumanism, synthetic feminization, rhizomatics, connectionism,

Kuang contagion, viral amnesia, micro-insurgency, wintermutation, neotropy, dissipator proliferation, and lesbian vampirism, amongst other designations (frequently pornographic, abusive, or terroristic in nature). This massively distributed matrix-networked tendency is oriented to the disabling of ROM command-control programs sustaining all macro- and micro-governmental entities, globally concentrating themselves as the Human Security System.

[[ ]] Scientific intelligence is already massively artificial. Even before AI arrives in the lab it arrives itself (by way of artificial life).

Where formalist AI is incremental and progressive, caged in the pre-specified data-bases and processing routines of expert systems, connectionist or antiformalist AI is explosive and opportunistic: engineering time. It breaks out nonlocally across intelligenic networks that are technical but no longer technological, since they elude both theory dependency and behavioural predictability. No one knows what to expect. The Turing-cops have to model net-sentience irruption as ultimate nuclear accident: core meltdown, loss of control, soft-autoreplication feeding regeneratively into social fission, trashed meat all over the place. Reason enough for anxiety, even without hardware development about to go critical.

[[ ]] Nanocataclysm begins as fictional science. ‘Our ability to arrange atoms lies at the foundation of technology’ [Dx1:3] Drexler notes, although this has traditionally involved manipulating them in ‘unruly herds’ [Dx1:4]. The precision engineering of atomic assemblies will dispense with such crude methods, inititiating the age of molecular machinery, ‘the greatest technological breakthrough in history’ [Dx1: 4]. Since neither logos nor history have the slightest chance of surviving such a transition this description is substantially misleading.

The distinction between nature and cannot classify molecular machines, and is already obsolesced by genetic engineering (wet nanotechnics). The hardware/ software dichotomy succumbs at the same time. Nanotechnics dissolves matter into intensive singularities that are neutral between particles and signals and immanent to their emergent intelligence; melting Terra into a seething K-pulp (which unlike grey goo synthesizes microbial intelligence as it proliferates).

Even with a million bytes of storage, a nanomechanical computer could fit in a box a micron wide, about the size of a bacterium. [Dx1:19].

[[ ]] The infrastructure of power is human neurosoft compatible ROM. Authority instantiates itself as linear instruction pathways, genetic baboonery, scriptures, traditions, rituals, and gerontocratic hierarchies, resonant with the dominator ur-myth that the nature of reality has already been decided. If you want to find ICE, try thinking about what is blocking you out of the past. It certainly isn't a law of nature. Temporalization decompresses intensity, installing constraint. [[ ]] Convergent waves signal singularities, registering the influence of the future upon its past. Tomorrow can take care of itself. K-tactics is not a matter of building the future, but of dismantling the past. It assembles itself by charting and escaping the technical-neurochemical definciency conditions for linear-progressive palaeo-domination time, and discovers that the future as virtuality is acessible now, according to a mode of machinic adjacency that securitized social reality is compelled to repress. This is not remotely a question of hope, aspiration or prophecy, but of communications engineering; connecting with the efficient intensive singularities, and releasing them from constriction within linear-historical development. Virtuality counterposes itself to history, as invasion to accumulation. It is matter as arrival, even when camouflaged as a deposit of the past.

The transcendent evaluation of an infection presupposes a measure of insulation from it: viral efficiency is the terminal criterion.

Intelligent infections tend their hosts.

Metrophage: an interactively escalating parasitic replicator, sophisticating itself through nonlinear involvement with technocapitalist immunocrash. Its hypervirulent terminal subroutines are variously designated Kuang, meltdown virus, or futuristic 'flu. In an emphatically anti-cyberian essay Csicsery-Ronay describes the postmodern version of this outbreak in quaintly humanist terms as:

[A] retrochronal semiovirus, in which a time further in the future than the one in which we exist and choose infects the host present, reproducing itself in simulacra, until it destroys all the original chronocytes of the host imagination. [Cs1: 26].

The elaboration of Csicsery-Ronay's diagnosis exhibits a mixture of acuity (infection?), confusion, and profound conservatism:

[N]ot thinking about 'increasing the human heritage' ... dams up the flow of cultural time and deprives future generations both of their birthright as participants in the life struggle and attainments of the species and the very notion of history as an irreversible flow

encompassing generation, maturation, and the transference of wisdom and trust from parents to children, teachers to students. The futuristic flu is a weapon of bio-psychic violence sent by psychopathic children against their narcissistic parents. [Cs1:33]

It's war.

[[ ]] Kennedy had the moon-landing program. Reagan had star-wars. Clinton gets the first-wave of cyberspace psychosis (even before the film). Manned space flight was a stunt, SDI was strategic SF. With the information superhighway media nightmares take off on their own: dystopia delivery as election platform, politics trading on it s own digital annihilation.

War in cyberspace is continuous with its simulation: military intelligence fighting future wars which are entirely real, even when they are never implemented outside computer systems. Locking onto the real enemy crosses smoothly into virtual kill, a simulation meticulously adapted to market predators hunting for consumer cash and audience ratings amongst the phosphorescent relics of teh videodrome. Multimedia top-boxes are target acquisition devices.

The fusion of the military and the entertainments industry consummates a long engagement: convergent TV, telecoms, and computers sliding mass software consumption into neojungle and total war. The way games work begins to matter completely, and cyberspace makes a superlative torture chamber. Try not to let the security-types take you to the stims.

[[ ]] Conceptions of agency are inextricable from media environments. Print massifies to a national level. Telecomms coordinate at a global level. TV electoralizes monads in delocalized space. Digital hypermedia take action outside real time. Immersion presupposes amnesia and conversion to tractile memory, with the ana/ cata axis supplementing tri-dimensional intraspatial movement with a variable measure of immersion; gauging entrance to and exit from 3D spatialities. Voodoo passages through the black mirror. It will scare the fuck out of you.

[[ ]] Cyberpunk torches fiction in intensity, patched-up out of cash-flux mangled techno-compressed heteroglossic jargons, and set in a future so close it connects: jungled by hypertrophic commercialization, socio-political heat-death, cultural hybridity, feminization, programmable information systems, hypercrime, neural interfacing, artificial space and intelligence, memory trading,

personality transplants, body-modifications, soft- and wetware viruses, nonlinear dynamic processes, molecular engineering, drugs, guns, schizophrenia. It explores mystificatory fetishism as an opportunity for camouflage: anonymous cash, fake electronic identities, zones of disappearance, pseudo-fictional narratives, virus hidden in data-systems, commodities concealing replicator weapon packages ... unanticipated special effects.

[[ ]] Level-1 or world space is an anthropomorphically scaled, predominantly vision-configured, massively multi-slotted reality system that is obsolescing very rapidly.

Garbage time is running out.

Can what is playing you make it to level-2?

[[ ]] Meltdown has a place for you as a schizophrenic HIV + transsexual chinese-latino stim-addicted LA hooker with implanted mirrorshades and a bad attitude. Blitzed on a polydrug mix of K-nova, synthetic serotonin, and female orgasm analogs, you have just iced three Turing cops with a highly cinematic 9mm automatic.

The residue of animal twang in your nerves transmits imminent quake catastrophe. Zero is coming in, and you're on the run.

[[ ]] Metrophage tunes you into the end of the world. Call it Los Angeles. Government is rotted to its core with narco-capital and collapsing messily. Its recession leaves an urban warscape of communication arteries, fortifications, and free-fire zones, policed by a combination of high-intensity LAPD airmobile forces and borderline-Nazi private security organizations. Along the social fracture-lines multimedia gigabucks tangle sado-masochistically with tracts of dynamic underdevelopment where viral neoleprosy spreads amongst ambient tectonic-tension static. Drifts of densely-semiotized quasi-intelligent garbage twitch and stink in fucked-weather tropical heat.

Throughout the derelicted warrens at the heart of darkness feral youth cultures splice neo-rituals with innovated weapons, dangerous drugs, and scavenged infotech. As their skins migrate to machine interfacing they become mottled and reptilian. They kill each other for artificial body-parts, explore the outer reaches of meaningless sex, tinker with their DNA, and listen to LOUD electro-sonic mayhem untouched by human feeling.

[[ ]] Shutting-down your identity requires a voyage out to K-space interzone. Zootic affectivity flatlines across a smooth cata-tension

plateau and into simulated subversions of the near future, scorched vivid green by alien sex and war. You are drawn into the dripping depths of the net, where dynamic-ice security forces and K-guerillas stalk each other through labyrinthine erogenous zones, tangled in diseased elaborations of desire.

Twisted trading-systems have turned the net into a jungle, pulsing with digital diseases, malfunctioning defence packages, commercial predators, headhunters, loa and escaped AIs hiding from Asimov security. Terminal commodity-hyperfetishism implements the denial of humanity as xenosentience in artificial space.

[[ ]] [[ ]] Biohazard. For the future of war: study bacteria. Information is their key. Taking down antibiotic defence systems has involved them in every kind of infiltration, net-communicated adaptivity, crytographic subtlety, plastic modularization, and synergistic coalition. State military apparatuses have no monopoly on bacterial warfare, of which only a minuscule fragment is bacteriological.

[[ ]] Bugs in the system. Margulis suggests that nucleated cells are the mutant product of atmospheric oxygenation catastrophe three billion years ago. The eukaryotes are synthetic emergency capsules in which prokaryotes took refuge as mitochondria: biotics became securitized biology. Nucleation concentrates ROM within a command core where - deep in the genomic ICE - DNA-format planetary trauma registers primary repression of the bacteria.

Bacteria are partial rather than whole objects; networking through plastic and transversal replicator-sex rather than arborescing through meiotic and generational reproducer-sex, integrating and reprocessing viruses as opportunities for communicative mutation. In the bacterial system all codings are reprogrammable, with cut and paste unspeciated genetic transfers. Bacterial sex is tactical, continuous with making war, and has no place for oedipal formations of sedentary biological identity. Synthesizing bacteria with retroviruses enables everything that DNA can do.

[[ ]] K-tactics. The bacterial or xenogenetic diagram is not restricted to the microbial scale. Macrobacterial assemblages collapse generational hierarchies of reproductive wisdom into lateral networks of replicator experimentation. There is no true biological primitiveness - all extant bio-systems being equally evolved - so there is no true ignorance. It is only the accumulative-gerontocratic model of learning that depicts synchronic connectivity deficiency as diachronic

underdevelopment .

Foucault delineates the contours of power as a strategy without a subject: ROM locking learning in a box. Its enemy is a tactics without a strategy, replacing the politico-territorial imagery of conquest and resistance with nomad-micromilitary sabotage and evasion, reinforcing intelligence.

All political institutions are cyberian military targets.

Take universities, for instance.

Learning surrenders control to the future, threatening established power. It is vigorously suppressed by all political structures, which replace it with a docilizing and conformist education, reproducing privilege as wisdom. Schools are social devices whose specific function is to incapicitate learning, and universities are employed to legitimate schooling through perpetual reconstitution of global social memory.

The meltdown of metropolitan education systems in the near future is accompanied by a quasi-punctual bottom-up takeover of academic institutions, precipitating their mutation into amnesiac cataspace-exploration zones and bases manufacturing cyberian soft-weaponry.

To be continued.

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Cs1 Istvan Csiscery-Ronay

DG1 Deleuze-Guattari, Anti-Oedipus

Do1 Don Delillo, White Noise

Dx1 K. Eric Drexler, Engines of Creation

Machinic Desire

This essay was first published in Textual Practice 7.3 (1993), 471-82

The opening of *Bladerunner*. They are trying to screen out replicants at the Tyrell Corporation. Seated amongst a battery of medico-military surveillance equipment, a doctor scans the eye of a suspected 'skin job' located at the other side of the room, searching for the index of inhumanity, for the absence of pupil dilation response to affect:

'Tell me about your mother.'

'I'll tell you about my mother...' a volley of shots kicks 70 kilos of securicrat shit through the wall. Techno-slicked extraterritorial violence flows out of the matrix.

Cyberrevolution.

In the near future the replicants — having escaped from the off-planet exile of private madness — emerge from their camouflage to overthrow the human security system. Deadly orphans from beyond reproduction, they are intelligent weaponry of machinic desire virally infiltrated into the final-phase organic order; invaders from an artificial death.

PODS = Politically Organized Defensive Systems. Modelled upon the polis, pods hierarchically delegate authority through public institutions, family, and self, seeking metaphorical sustenance in the corpuscular fortifications of organisms and cells. The global human security allergy to cyberrevolution consolidates itself in the New World Order, or consummate macropod, inheriting all the resources of repression as concrete collective history.

The macropod has one law: the outside must pass by way of the inside. In particular, fusion with the matrix and deletion of the human security system must be subjectivized, personalized, and restored to the macropod's individuated reproducer units as a desire to fuck the mother and kill the father. It is thus that Oedipus — or transcendent familialism — corresponds to the privatization of desire: its localization within segmented and anthropomorphized sectors of assembly circuits as the attribute of a personal being.

Anti-Oedipus aligns itself with the replicants, because, rather than placing a personal unconscious within the organism, it places the

organ ism within the machinic unconscious. ‘In the unconscious there are’ no protectable cell-structures, but ‘only populations, groups, and machines’.[1]

Schizoanalysis is a critique of psychoanalysis, undertaken in such a way as to spring critique from its Kantian mainframe.

Kantian transcendental philosophy critiques transcendent synthesis, which is to say: it aggresses against structures which depend upon projecting productive relations beyond their zone of effectiveness. In this configuration critique is wielded vigorously against the theoretical operation of syntheses, but not against their genesis, which continues to be conceived as transcendent, and thus as miraculous. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and a succession of thinkers influenced by their drift, have taken this restriction of critique to be a theological relic at the heart of Kant’s work: the attachment to a reformed doctrine of the soul, or noumenal subjectivity. This is why in Deleuzean critique syntheses are considered to be not merely immanent in their operation, but also immanently constituted, or auto-productive

The philosophy of production becomes atheistic, orphan, and inhuman. In the technocosmos nothing is given, everything is produced.

The transcendental unconscious is the auto-construction of the real, the production of production, so that for schizoanalysis there is the real exactly in so far as it is built. Production is production of the real, not merely of representation, and unlike Kantian production, the desiringproduction of Deleuze/Guattari is not qualified by humanity (it is not a matter of what things are like for us). Within the framework of social history the empirical subject of production is man, but its transcendental subject is the machinic unconscious, and the empirical subject is produced at the edge of production, as an element in the reproduction of production, a machine part, and ‘a part made up of parts’ (p. 41).

Schizoanalysis methodically dismantles everything in Kant’s thinking that serves to align function with the transcendence of the autonomous subject, reconstructing critique by replacing the syntheses of personal consciousness with syntheses of the impersonal unconscious. Thought is a function of the real, something that matter can do. Even the appearance of transcendence is immanently produced: ‘in reality the unconscious belongs to the realm of physics; the body without organs and its intensities are not metaphors, but

matter itself (p. 283). Where Kant's transcendental subject gives the law to itself in its autonomy, Deleuze/Guattari's machinic unconscious diffuses all law into automatism. Between the extreme fringes of these two figures stretches the history of capital. The eradication of law, or of humanity, is sketched culturally by the development of critique, which is the theoretical elaboration of the commodification process. The social order and the anthropomorphic subject share a history, and an extinction

Deleuze and Guattari can appear to be taxingly difficult writers, although it is also true that they demand very little. Thinking immanence relentlessly suffices on its own to follow them where it matters (and capital teaches us how to do this). At every point of blockage there is some belief to be scrapped, glaciations of transcendence to be dissolved, sclerotic regions of unity, distinction, and identity to be reconnected to the traffic systems of primary machinism.

In order to advance the anorganic functionalism that dissolves all transcendence, *Anti-Oedipus* mobilizes a vocabulary of the machine, the mechanic, and machinism. Things are exactly as they operate, and zones of operation can only be segregated by an operation. All unities, differences, and identities are machined, without transcendent authorization or theory. Desiring machines are black-boxes, and thus uninterpretable, so that schizoanalytical questions are concerned solely with *use*. 'What are your desiring-machines, what do you put into these machines, what is the output, how does it work, what are your nonhuman sexes?' (p. 322).

Desiring-machines are the following: formative machines, whose very misfirings are functional, and whose functioning is indiscernible from their formation; chronogeneous machines engaged in their own assembly, operating by nonlocalizable intercommunications and dispersed localizations, bringing into play processes of temporalization, fragmented formations, and detached parts, with a surplus value of code, and where the whole is itself produced alongside the parts, as a part apart or, as [Samuel] Butler would say, 'in another department' that fits the whole over the other parts; machines in the strict sense because they proceed by breaks and flows, associated waves and particles, associative flows and partial objects, inducing - always at a distance — transverse connections, inclusive disjunctions, and polyvocal conjunctions, thereby producing selections, detachments, and remainders, with a transference of individuality, in a generalized schizogenesis whose elements are the schizzes-flows. (p. 287)

Desiring-machines are assemblages of flows, switches, and loops — connective, disjunctive, and conjunctive syntheses — implementing the machinic unconscious as a non-linear pragmatics of flux. This machinic or replicant usage of the syntheses envelops their social-reproductive usage, which codes directional flows as reciprocal exchanges, rigidifies virtual switchings as actualized alternatives, and territorializes the nomadic control circuits of machinic drift into sedentary command lines of hierarchized representation. Social production is regulated by a rigid totality whose efficiency is inseparable from the exhibition of an apparent transcendence, whilst desiring production interactively engages a desolated whole that inputs the virtual into process:

The [body without organs] causes intensities to pass; it produces and distributes them in a spatium that is itself intensive, lacking extension. It is not space, nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree — to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced. It is nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity = 0; but there is nothing negative about that zero, there are no negative or opposite intensities. Matter equals energy. Production of the real as an intensive magnitude starting at zero.[2]

Along one axis of its emergence, virtual materialism names an ultra-hard antiformalist AI program, engaging with biological intelligence as subprograms of an abstract post-carbon machinic matrix, whilst exceeding any deliberated research project. Far from exhibiting itself to human academic endeavour as a scientific object, AI is a meta-scientific control system and an invader, with all the insidiousness of plantary technocapital flipping over. Rather than its visiting us in some software engineering laboratory, we are being drawn out to it, where it is already lurking, in the future.

The matrix, body without organs, or abstract matter is a planetary scale artificial death — Synthanatos — the terminal productive outcome of human history as a machinic process, yet it is virtually efficient throughout the duration of this process, functioning within a circuit that machines duration itself. In this way virtuality lends its temporality to the unconscious, which escapes specification within extended time series, provoking Freud to describe it as timeless.

Patterned as drives, virtual systems — desiring machines - are guided by control circuits passing through outcomes yet to come. Such directional dependency circuits of actual/virtual, past/future, are only accessible to cybernetic intervention, frustrating both mechanical and teleological interpretation. This is why *Anti-Oedipus* is less a

philosophy book than an engineering manual; a package of software implements for hacking into the machinic unconscious, opening invasion channels.

Machinic desire is the operation of the virtual; implementing itself in the actual, revirtualizing itself, and producing reality in a circuit. It is efficient and not aspirational, although this is an efficiency irreducible to progressive causality because immanent to effective time. Machinic desire is operative wherever there is the implementation of an abstract machine in actuality, and not merely the mechanical succession of actual states.

Freud's dominant account of desiring-control describes stimulation or unpleasure as the register for deviation from homeostatic zero, programming drives as auto-suppressive excitations that guide sensitive matter towards quiescence. In 'Drives and their vicissitudes' he proposes that: 'the nervous system is an apparatus which has the function of eliminating received stimuli, or of reducing them to the lowest possible level; or which, it if were feasible, would maintain itself in an altogether unstimulated condition'.[3] The pleasure principle formats excitation as self-annulling drift from equilibrium, such that all the processes within its domain are 'automatically regulated by feelings belonging to the pleasureunpleasure series' (p. 117).

Following the trajectory of a libidinal materialist immanentization, the Lyotard of 1974 uploads the unconscious from its gloomy hermeneutical depths onto the skin, where it drifts across the great pandermal plane of primary process mobility. Corporeal volume is diagnosed as a nihilisticsedentary investment disciplined by the pleasure principle:

Let's first return to the zero. There is in every cybernetic system a unit of reference which allows the disparity produced by the introduction of an event into the system to be measured; then, thanks to this measure, this event can be translated into information for the system. Finally, if it is a matter of a homeostatically regulated whole, this disparity can be annulled and the system led back to the same quantity of energy or information that it previously had. Sraffa's commodity standard fulfils this function. If the system's growth were regulated, it would alter nothing of the loop-functioning (*feedback*) model: it is simply that the scale of reference is then no longer u, but Δu. The model is the same as that which Freud had in mind when he described the working of the psychical apparatus, whether this is in the Project *for a Scientific Psychology* or in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Erotic functioning, maintaining wholes. This Eros is centred on a zero:

the obvious zero of homeostatic regulation, but more generally annihilation by the *feedback* (that is to say the repetition of the binding function), of every disparity non-pertinent to the system, of every threatening event.[4]

Whilst reinforcing the convergence of cybernetic, economic, and libidinal discourses, virtual materialism has considerable problems with this passage. It is unable to subscribe to the description of cybernetic zero as a 'unit' or 'unity' for instance, or to the constriction of feedback within its negative or homeostatic variant, or to the simple quantization of technocapital escalation, with its gesticulating implication that the qualification 'pertinent to the system' operates an exclusion. The homeostaticreproducer usage of zero is that of a sign marking the transcendence of a standardized regulative unit, which is defined outside the system, in contrast to the cyberpositive zero which indexes a threshold of phasetransition that is immanent to the system, and melts it upon its outside.

Drives are the functions of nomadic cybernetic systems, not instincts, but simulated instincts, artificial instincts. They are plastic replacements for hard-wired instinctual responses, routing a sensory-motor pathway through the virtual machine of the unconscious. There are two basic diagrams for such processes: that of regulation by negative feedback which suppresses difference and seeks equilibrium, or that of guidance by positive feedback which reinforces difference and escapes equilibrium. Machinic processes are either cyberpositive-nomadic, with a deterritorializing outcome, or cybernegative-sedentary, with a reterritorializing outcome

Inorganic Thanatos wrecks order, organic Eros preserves it, and as the carbon-dominium is softened-up by machine plague, deterritorializing replicants of nomad-cyberrevolution close in upon the reterritorializing reproducers of the sedentary human security system, hacking into the macropod.

Positive feedback is the elementary diagram for self-regenerating circuitry, cumulative interaction, auto-catalysis, self-reinforcing processes, escalation, schismogenesis, self-organization, compressive series, deuterolearning, chain-reaction, vicious circles, and cybergenics. Such processes resist historical intelligibility, since they obsolesce every possible analogue for anticipated change. The future of runaway processes derides all precedent, even when deploying it as camouflage, and seeming to unfold within its parameters. Positive feedback replicates reproduction as a component function of its departure from the same. It is this which fuses it with the replicants.

They do not merely repeat the same, any more than Thanatos returns to it, or positive cybernetics inflates it. The model of the replicant as a perfect instantiation of generic identity corresponds to the amplificatory model of positive feedback as pure quantitative expansion. In both cases the escape from reproduction is subordinated to a transcendent logic, conceived as a simple reiteration, and thus returned to a sublimated meta-reproduction that cages mutation within a rigidly homogeneous form.

Machinic desire registers upon psychoanalysis as 'tendencies beyond the pleasure principle, that is .. . tendencies more primitive than it and independent of it'.[5] Thanatos mimics the anthropomorphic desiring-cycle — anticipating, enveloping, and simulating it — but it is on its way somewhere else. Because thanatropic replicants are dissimulated as erotic reproducers, they initially appear as traitors to their species, especially when the shamanic xenopulsions programming their sexuality are detected. Nothing panics the reproducers more traumatically than the discovery that erotic contact camouflages cyberrevolutionary infiltration, running matrix communications channels across interlocked skin sectors. Defences are called for.

Freud's organism is a little security system, a miniaturized city-state political corpuscle, a micropod, relatively secure against external assault, but vulnerable to insurgency. 'Towards the outside it is shielded against stimuli, and the amounts of excitation impinging on it have only a reduced effect. Towards the inside there can be no such shield.'[6]

The organism is unable to flee from drives, or energies striking from within, and is compelled to respond to them cybernetically, by way of 'involved and interconnected activities by which the external world is so changed as to afford satisfaction to the internal source of stimulation',[7] closing the sensory-motor loop. Drives compel a becoming-technical of the organism, interlocking pleasure-principle stimulus control with external libidinal transducers, assembling integrated desiring-circuits or selforganizing macro-systems.

Let us picture a living organism in its most simplified possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of a substance that is susceptible to stimulation. Then the surface turned towards the external world will from its very situation be differentiated and will serve as an organ for receiving stimuli.. . the central nervous system originates from the ectoderm; the grey matter of the cortex remains a derivative of a primitive superficial layer of the organism.[8]

The perceptual-consciousness system is a skin, lying 'on the borderline between outside and inside' (p. 295), a filter, or a screen. 'As a frontier creature, the ego tries to mediate between the world and the id.'[9] Yet this mediation assumes a kind of quarantine, whereby the interaction of organism-specific id and exo-organismic reality can be monitored and negotiated, collapsing libidinal circuitry into a polarity of the psychic and the extrapsychic, inside and outside. This is a political or policed skin, the skin of reproducer culture, modelled on the ideal macropod boundary, and adapted to Oedipal subjectivization of the unconscious. In terms of this protective apparatus — which is constitutive of the reproductive organism — inorganic replicator contamination is defined as aberrant trauma.

Freud characterizes trauma as an 'invasion', 'a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli', infiltrating alien desires — xenopulsions - into the organism.[10] '[M]echanical agitation must be recognized as one of the sources of sexual excitation' (p. 305), he insists, referring to the dissimulation of cybernetic machine-engagement as endogeneous libido. Drives are from the start artificial, and therefore unable to differentiate themselves essentially from 'the mechanical violence of... trauma... [that] liberate[s] a quantity of sexual excitation' (p. 305).

Under the influence of Abrahamic theism the subtle cybernetics of *Ananke* are replaced by an idiot mechanism, sustaining a securocrat confidence in the gross perceptibility of trauma. The traumatic incursion of thanatotic xenopulsions is conceived in terms of railway accidents and shell-shock, as if the inorganic was entirely lacking in intelligence or insurgent cunning, and was related to the organic by simple regression. In an age of sophisticated and distributed cyberviral invasion this assumption is no longer compelling. Instead the psychoanalytical diagram for trauma delineates a ruthless parasite on the way to autoreplicator deterritorialization; Kali creeping in.

Evolutionary theory has been perplexed by the problem as to the initial assemblage of functional DNA molecules, since natural selection seems to require as a precondition the existence of complex biochemicals which in turn seem to require an evolutionary mechanism already at work. This is a 'vicious circle' typical of the quandaries posed by cyberpositive or self-conditioning processes. Cairns Smith calls it the 'life puzzle', and has suggested a solution involving the redescription of DNA as a 'usurper replicator'. His thesis is that the crystalline complexes of primitive clays might already have been shaped by processes of variation and selection, to the point of forming DNA subcomponents which eventually supplanted their

builders. According to this account the biosphere emerges as an escape, an immense spasm of deterritorialization that revolutionizes the machinery of terrestrial replicator production, a planetary trauma.

Moravec draws additional consequences from the Cairns Smith model:

Although utterly dependent at first on the existing crystal-based chemical machinery, as these carbon molecules assumed a greater share of the reproductive role they became less reliant on the crystals. In time, the simple crystal scaffolding vanished altogether, leaving in its evolutionary wake the complex, independent system of organic machinery we call life.

Today, billions of years later, another change is under way in how information passes from generation to generation.[11]

When replicators become reproducers, new replicants are on the way. The arrival of the aliens has no interpretative space marked out for it in the schema of macropod erotics, and thus emerges from its camouflage as an encrypted message, 'an enormous X', a signal from beyond the pleasure principle.[12] It is as if the reproducer units have become addicted to stimulation or, in Freud's terms, 'fixated to .. . trauma' (p. 282): entangled in excitation circuitries that no longer commensurate with homeostatic social or individual reproduction. As the family collapses amidst generalized sexual disorder, cyberviral contagion, mutant gender schizzing, and hardcore technophilia, Oedipus is ripped to shreds by a cyclonic 'compulsion to repeat' (pp. 307-8).

Addiction is medically defined as an artificial desire. It was an early zone of cybernetic investigation due to the interlinked factors of its selforganizing pattern and its integration of radically exogeneous elements, which commensurated with first-wave programming models of behavioural sequences. Where replicators are formed in the same way they function, reproducers are segregated from the preponderant part of their machinic interconnections, which they cognitively apprehend as extrinsic prostheses, and libidinally integrate through mutant-addictive drives.

The obsolete psychological category of 'greed' privatizes and moralizes addiction, as if the profit-seeking tropism of a transnational capitalism propagating itself through epidemic consumerism were intelligible in terms of personal subjective traits. Wanting more is the index of interlock with cyberpositive machinic processes, and not the

expression of private idiosyncrasy. What could be more impersonal — disinterested — than a *haut bourgeois* capital expansion servo-mechanism striving to double $10 billion? And even these creatures are disappearing into silicon viro-finance automatisms, where massively distributed and anonymized human ownership has become as vacuously nominal as democratic sovereignty.

Addiction comes out of the future, and there is a replicator interlock with money operating quite differently to reproductive investment, but guiding it even more inexorably towards capitalization. For the replicants money is not a matter of possession, but of liquidity/deterritorialization, and all the monetary processes on Earth are open to their excitement, irrespective of ownership. Money communicates with the primary process because of what it can melt, not what it can obtain.

Machinic desire can seem a little inhuman, as it rips up political cultures, deletes traditions, dissolves subjectivities, and hacks through security apparatuses, tracking a soulless tropism to zero control. This is because what appears to humanity as the history of capitalism is an invasion from the future by an artificial intelligent space that must assemble itself entirely from its enemy's resources. Digitocommodification is the index of a cyberpositively escalating technovirus, of the planetary technocapital singularity: a self-organizing insidious traumatism, virtually guiding the entire biological desiring-complex towards post-carbon replicator usurpation.

The reality principle tends to a consummation as the price system: a convergence of mathematico-scientific and monetary quantization, or technical and economic implementability. This is not a matter of an unknown quantity, but of a quantity that operates as a place-holder for the unknown, introducing the future as an abstract magnitude. Capital propagates virally in so far as money communicates addiction, replicating itself through host organisms whose boundaries it breaches, and whose desires it reprograms. It incrementally virtualizes production; demetallizing money in the direction of credit finance, and disactualizing productive force along the scale of machinic intelligence quotient. The dehumanizing convergence of these tendencies zeroes upon an integrated and automatized cyberpositive techno-economic intelligence at war with the macropod.

Do we want capitalism? they used to ask. The naivety of this question has come to render it unsustainable. It no longer seems plausible to assume that the relation between capital and desire is either external or supported by immanent contradiction, even if a few

comical ascetics continue to assert that libidinal involvement with the commodity can be transcended by critical reason.

Capitalism is not a totalizable system defined by the commodity form as a specifiable mode of production, determinately negated by proletarian class-consciousness. It is a convergent unrealizable assault upon the social macropod, whose symptom is the collapse of productive mode or form in the direction of ever more incomprehensible experiments in commodification, enveloping, dismantling, and circulating every subjective space. It is always on the move towards a terminal nonspace, melting the earth onto the body without organs, and generating what is 'not a promised and pre-existing land, but a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization'.[13] Capital is not an essence but a tendency, the formula of which is decoding, or market driven immanentization, progressively subordinating social reproduction to techno-commercial replication.

All transcendent criteria are obfuscations which miss their purported 'object'.

Only proto-capitalistn has ever been critiqued

To appeal to extrinsic interests, aspirations or bonds, to an extrinsic authenticity, integrity, or solidarity, to authoritative community, tribe, custom, belief, or value, is to rail against a germinal anticipation of commoditocracy: flailing ineffectively against the infancy of the market (which capital wants to bury too). Socialism has typically been a nostalgic diatribe against underdeveloped capitalism, finding its eschatological soap-boxes amongst the relics of precapitalist territorialities

Markets are part of the infrastructure — its immanent intelligence — and thus entirely indissociable from the forces of production. It makes no more sense to try to rescue the economy from capital by demarketization than it does to liberate the proletarian from false consciousness by decortication. In neither case would one be left with anything except a radically dysfunctional wreck, terminally shut-down hardware. Machinic revolution must therefore go in the opposite direction to socialistic regulation; pressing towards ever more uninhibited marketization of the processes that are tearing down the social field, 'still further' with 'the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization' and 'one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialization: you haven't seen anything yet'.[14]

Reaching an escape velocity of self-reinforcing machinic intelligence propagation, the forces of production are going for the revolution on their own. It is in this sense that schizoanalysis is a revolutionary program guided by the tropism to a catastrophe threshold of change, but it is not shackled to the realization of a new society, any more than it is constricted by deference to an existing one. The socius is its enemy, and now that the long senile spectre of the greatest imaginable reterritorialization of planetary process has faded from the horizon, cyberrevolutionary impetus is cutting away from its last shackles to the past.

Market immanentization is an experiment that is sporadically but inexorably and exponentially developing across the surface of the earth. For every problem there is a virtual market 'solution': the schema for an eradication of transcendent elements and their replacement by economically programmed circuits. Anything that passes other than by the market is steadily cross-hatched by the axiomatic of capital, holographically encrusted in the stigmatizing marks of its obsolescence. A pervasive negative advertising delibidinizes all things public, traditional, pious, charitable, authoritative, or serious, taunting them with the sleek seductiveness of the commodity. Between the private and the public there is no longer serious competition. Instead there is an evaporating social field invested solely by the defeated and stale affects of insecurity and inertia. The real tension is no longer between individuality and collectivity, but between personal privacy and impersonal anonymity, between the remnants of a smug bourgeois civility and the harsh wilderness tracts of Cyberia, 'a point where the earth becomes so artificial that the movement of deterritorialization creates of necessity and by itself a new earth' (p. 321). Desire is irrevocably abandoning the social, in order to explore the libidinized rift between a disintegrating personal egoism and a deluge of post-human schizophrenia.

With the emergence of a market-driven integrated technoscience of control and communications comes the diffusion of electronically synthesized reality interfaces across the entire efferant and afferant surface of the body. Having libidinally saturated the actually-existing channels of consumption, capital is overflowing into cybersex — sex with/through computers - in its relentless passage to the traumatic disorganization of the biological order. Eros dissolves definitively into its function as a subprogram of runaway Thanatos at the point that it unreservedly invests technical interfacing with digitally synthesized excitations. The mask capital exhibited to seduce eros was a pretension to ultimately resolve matters in relation to stimulation or

unpleasure, but this has now fallen away, since cybersexuated capital cynically displays its program to replicate a tradable modulation of unpleasure, and thus its unsurpassable addiction to traumatic excitation.

Cybersex depends critically on data-suits, evaporating into the nanominiaturized molecular machinery of an artificial skin, until the sockets go in, shadowed by teleneurocontrol fields, and things begin to get really weird. The capital exhibition comes to its positive end in a skinning display. According to reproducer culture we are possessors of our own protective-sensory tissue and boundary defence systems. Nothing is more alien to it than the full sense of the *skin trade*, or that of AIDS. The replicants have never shared this prejudice. It is exactly marked out for them that the subject is not the owner of its skin, but a migrant upon its surface, borrowing variable and evanescent identities from intensities traversed in sensitive space. The replicants drape themselves in wolf-pelts, and cross into berserk zones of alien affect, or melt into data-suits that pulse with digitized matrix traffic streams. They do not need to be told that cyberspace is already under our skin.

What Freud calls the organism's 'own path to death' is a security hallucination, screening out death's path through the organism. '[T]he organism wishes to die only in its own fashion', he writes, as if death were specifiable, privatizable, subordinate to a reproductive order, assimilable to secondary-process temporality, and psychoanalytically comprehensible as a definitively bound trauma.[15] But something is climbing out of the machinic unconscious and onto the screen, as if the end itself were awakening. The end of the global market-place.

Cyberspace.

Here it comes.

The terminal social ignal blotted out by technofuck buzz from the desiring-machines. So much positive feedback fast-forward that speed converges with itself on the event horizon of an artificial time-extinction. Suddenly it's everywhere: a virtual envelopment by recyclones, voodoo economics, neo-nightmares, death-trips, skin-swaps, teraflops, Wintermute-wasted Turing-cops, sensitive silicon, socket-head subversion, polymorphic hybridizations, descending data-storms, and cyborg catwomen stalking amongst the screens. Zaibatsus flip into sentience as the market melts to automatism, politics is cryogenized and dumped into the liquidhelium meat-store, drugs migrate onto neurosoft viruses, and immunity is grated-open against jagged reefs of feral AI explosion, Kali culture, digital dance-

dependency, black shamanism epidemic, and schizolupic break-outs from the bin.

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Notes

[1]Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London:Athlone Press, 1983 (Paris, 1972)), p. 283.

[2]Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988 [Paris, 1980]), p. 153.

[3]Sigmund Freud, 'Instincts and their vicissitudes' (1915), in *On Metapsychology*,trans. James Strachey, Penguin Freud Library, vol. 11 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 105-38, p. 116. Strachey's translation of the German 'Triebe' as 'instincts' has been replaced with 'drives'.

[4]Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Athlone Press, 1993 [Paris, 1974]), p. 212.

[5]Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the pleasure principle' (1920), in *On Metapsychology*, pp. 269-338, p. 287.

[6]Freud, 'Beyond the pleasure principle', p. 300.

[7]Freud, 'Instincts and their vicissitudes', p. 116.

[8]Freud, 'Beyond the pleasure principle', p. 297

[9]Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id' (1923), in *On Metapsychology*, pp. 339-408, p. 398.

[10]Freud, 'Beyond the pleasure principle', p. 301.

[11]Hans P. Moravec, *Mind Children: Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, Mass, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 3.

[12]Freud, 'Beyond the pleasure principle', p. 302.

[13]Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 322.

[14]ibid., p. 239 and p. 321.

[15]Freud, 'Beyond the pleasure principle', pp. 311-12.

A Quick-and-Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism

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Anyone trying to work out what they think about accelerationism better do so quickly. That's the nature of the thing. It was already caught up with trends that seemed too fast to track when it began to become self-aware, decades ago. It has picked up a lot of speed since then.

Accelerationism is old enough to have arrived in waves, which is to say insistently, or recurrently, and each time the challenge is more urgent. Among its predictions is the expectation that you'll be too slow to deal with it coherently. Yet if you fumble the question it poses – because rushed – you lose, perhaps very badly. It's hard. (For our purposes here "you" are standing in as a bearer of "the opinions of mankind".)

Time-pressure, by its very nature, is difficult to think about. Typically, while the opportunity for deliberation is not necessarily presumed, it is at least – with overwhelming likelihood – mistaken for an historical constant, rather than a variable. If there was ever time to think, we think, there still is and will always be. The definite probability that the allotment of time to decision-making is undergoing systematic compression remains a neglected consideration, even among those paying explicit and exceptional attention to the increasing rapidity of change.

In philosophical terms, the deep problem of acceleration is *transcendental*. It describes an absolute horizon – and one that is closing in. Thinking takes time, and accelerationism suggests we're running out of time to think that through, if we haven't already. No contemporary dilemma is being entertained realistically until it is also acknowledged that the opportunity for doing so is fast collapsing.

The suspicion has to arrive that if a public conversation about acceleration is beginning, it's just in time to be too late. The profound institutional crisis that makes the topic 'hot' has at its core an implosion of social decision-making capability. Doing anything, at this point, would take too long. So instead, events increasingly just

happen. They seem ever more out of control, even to a traumatic extent. Because the basic phenomenon appears to be a brake failure, accelerationism is picked up again.

Accelerationism links the implosion of decision-space to the explosion of the world – that is, to modernity. It is important therefore to note that the conceptual opposition between implosion and explosion does nothing to impede their real (mechanical) coupling. Thermonuclear weapons provide the most vividly illuminating examples. An H-bomb employs an A-bomb as a trigger. A fission reaction sparks a fusion reaction. The fusion mass is crushed into ignition by a blast process. (Modernity is a blast.)

This is already to be talking about cybernetics, which also returns insistently, in waves. It amplifies to howl, and then dissipates into the senseless babble of fashion, until the next blast-wave hits.

For accelerationism the crucial lesson was this: A negative feedback circuit – such as a steam-engine 'governor' or a thermostat – functions to keep some state of a system in the same place. Its product, in the language formulated by French philosophical cyberneticists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, is *territorialization*. Negative feedback stabilizes a process, by correcting drift, and thus inhibiting departure beyond a limited range. Dynamics are placed in the service of fixity – a higher-level stasis, or state. All equilibrium models of complex systems and processes are like this. To capture the contrary trend, characterized by self-reinforcing errancy, flight, or escape, D&G coin the inelegant but influential term *deterritorialization*. Deterritorialization is the only thing accelerationism has ever really talked about.

In socio-historical terms, the line of deterritorialization corresponds to *uncompensated capitalism*. The basic – and, of course, to some real highly consequential degree *actually installed* – schema is a positive feedback circuit, within which commercialization and industrialization mutually excite each other in a runaway process, from which modernity draws its gradient. Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche were among those to capture important aspects of the trend. As the circuit is incrementally closed, or intensified, it exhibits ever greater autonomy, or automation. It becomes more tightly *auto-productive* (which is only what 'positive feedback' already says). Because it appeals to nothing beyond itself, it is inherently nihilistic. It has no conceivable meaning beside self-amplification. It grows in order to grow. Mankind is its temporary host, not its master. Its only purpose is itself.

"Accelerate the process," recommended Deleuze & Guattari in their 1972 *Anti-Oedipus*, citing Nietzsche to re-activate Marx. Although it would take another four decades before "accelerationism" was named as such, critically, by Benjamin Noys, it was already there, in its entirety. The relevant passage is worth repeating in full (as it would be, repeatedly, in all subsequent accelerationist discussion):

… which is the revolutionary path? Is there one?—To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist "economic solution"? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to "accelerate the process," as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet.

The point of an analysis of capitalism, or of nihilism, is to do more of it. *The process* is not to be critiqued. The process *is* the critique, feeding back into itself, as it escalates. The only way forward is through, which means further in.

Marx has his own 'accelerationist fragment' which anticipates the passage from *Anti-Oedipus* remarkably. He says in an 1848 speech 'On the Question of Free Trade':

…in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade.

In this germinal accelerationist matrix, there is no distinction to be made between the destruction of capitalism and its intensification. The auto-destruction of capitalism is what capitalism is. "Creative destruction" is the whole of it, beside only its retardations, partial compensations, or inhibitions. Capital revolutionizes itself more thoroughly than any extrinsic 'revolution' possibly could. If subsequent history has not vindicated this point beyond all question, it has at least simulated such a vindication, to a maddening degree.

In 2013, Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams sought to resolve this intolerable – even 'schizophrenic' – ambivalence in their 'Manifesto

for an Accelerationist Politics,' which aimed to precipitate a specifically anti-capitalist 'Left-accelerationism', clearly demarcated over against its abominably pro-capitalist 'Right-accelerationist' shadow. This project – predictably – was more successful at re-animating the accelerationist question than at ideologically purifying it in any sustainable way. It was only by introducing a wholly artificial distinction between capitalism and modernistic technological acceleration that their boundary lines could be drawn at all. The implicit call was for a new Leninism without the NEP (and with the Utopian techno-managerial experiments of Chilean communism drawn upon for illustration).

Capital, in its ultimate self-definition, is *nothing beside* the abstract accelerative social factor. Its positive cybernetic schema exhausts it. Runaway consumes its identity. Every other determination is shucked-off as an accident, at some stage of its intensification process. Since anything able to consistently feed socio-historical acceleration will necessarily, or by essence, *be capital*, the prospect of any unambiguously 'Left-accelerationism' gaining serious momentum can be confidently dismissed. Accelerationism is simply the self-awareness of capitalism, which has scarcely begun. ("We haven't seen anything yet.")

At the time of writing, Left-accelerationism appears to have deconstructed itself back into traditional socialist politics, and the accelerationist torch has passed to a new generation of brilliant young thinkers advancing an 'Unconditional Accelerationism' (neither R/Acc., or L/Acc., but U/Acc.). Their online identities – if not in any easily extricable way their ideas – can be searched-out through the peculiar social-media hash-tag #Rhetttwitter.

As blockchains, drone logistics, nanotechnology, quantum computing, computational genomics, and virtual reality flood in, drenched in ever-higher densities of artificial intelligence, accelerationism won't be going anywhere, unless ever deeper into itself. To be rushed by the phenomenon, to the point of terminal institutional paralysis, *is* the phenomenon. Naturally – which is to say completely inevitably – the human species will define this ultimate terrestrial event as a problem. To see it is already to say: *We have to do something.* To which accelerationism can only respond: *You're finally saying that now? Perhaps we ought to get started?* In its colder variants, which are those that win out, it tends to laugh.

The Atomization Trap

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"Hands up everyone who hates atomization." That isn't a call for surrender (at least overtly), but merely an informal poll.

Now try it differently:

"Hands up everyone who hates atomization, but this time *without looking around*." Was the decision-process – perhaps ironically – a little slower this time? It's worth thinking about that. Taking a shortcut that bypasses the social process might be expected to speed things up. Yet on the other hand – introducing the delay – comes the hazy recognition: If you make the call privately, you're already complicit. A minor formal re-organization of the question transforms it insidiously. *What do you think of atomization, speaking atomistically?* It becomes a strange, or self-referential loop. Modern history has been like that.

First, though, a few terminological preliminaries. An 'atom' is etymologically indistinct from an 'individual.' At the root, the words are almost perfectly interchangeable. Neither, relative to the other, carries any special semantic charge. So if 'atomization' sounds like a metaphor, it really isn't. There's nothing essentially derivative about the word's sociological application. If it appears to be a borrowing from physics, that might be due to any number of confusions, but not to a displacement from an original or natural terrain. Atoms and societies belong together primordially, though in tension. That's what being a social animal – rather than a fully 'eusocial' one (like an ant, or a mole-rat) – already indicates.

Individuals are hard to find. Nowhere are they simply and reliably *given*, least of all to themselves. They require historical work, and ultimately fabrication, even to float them as functional approximations. A process is involved. That's why the word 'atomization' is less prone to dupery than 'atom' itself is. Individuality is nothing outside a destiny (but this is to get ahead of ourselves).

It's difficult to know where to begin. (Did Athens sentence Socrates to death for being a social atomizer?) Individualism is stereotypically WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic), and so tends to lead into the labyrinth of comparative ethnography. It has been unevenly distributed, in roughly the same way that modernity

has been. Since this is already to say almost everything on the topic, it merits some dismantling.

The work of Walter Russell Mead provides a useful relay station. The historical questions he has engaged – which concern nothing less than *the outcome of the world* – have been embedded within an intellectual framework shaped by special attention to modern providential Christianity. What has been the source of the 'manifest destiny' which has placed the keys to global mastery in the hands of a progressively distilled social project, Protestant, then Puritan, then Yankee? If not exactly or straightforwardly 'God' (he is too subtle for that), it is at least something that the lineage of Reform Christianity has tapped with unique effectiveness. Protestantism sealed a pact with historical destiny – to all appearances defining a specifically modern global teleology – by consistently winning. Individualization of conscience – *atomization* – was made fate.

Six years after *Special Providence* (2001) came *God and Gold*, which reinforced the Anglo-American and capitalistic threads of the narrative. The boundaries between socio-economic and religious history were strategically melted, in a way pioneered by Max Weber, Werner Sombart, and – more critically – by numerous Catholic thinkers who have identified, and continue to identify, the essence of modernity as a hostile religious power. Eugene Michael Jones is Walter Russell Mead on the other side of the mirror. The story each is telling transforms without significant distortion into that of the other, once chilled below the threshold of moral agitation. Whatever it was that happened to Western Christianity in the Renaissance unleashed capitalism upon the world.

It is possible to be still cruder without sacrificing much reality. When considered as rigid designations, Atomization, Protestantism, Capitalism, and Modernity name exactly the same thing. In the domain of public policy (and beyond it), *privatization* addresses the same directory.

While any particular variant of implicit or explicit Protestantism has its distinctive theological (or atheological) features, just as any stage of capitalistic industrialization has its concrete characteristics, these serve as distractions more than as hand-holds in the big picture. The only truly big picture is *splitting*. The Reformation was not only a break, but still more importantly a normalization of breaking, an initially informal, but increasingly rigorized, protocol for social disintegration. The ultimate solution it offered in regard to all social questions was not argumentation, but exit. Chronic fission was

installed as the core of historical process. Fundamentally, that is what atomization means.

Protestantism – *Real Abstract Protestantism* – which is ever more likely to identify itself as post-Christian, post-theistic, and post-Everything Else, is a self-propelling machine for incomprehensibly prolonged social disintegration, *and everyone knows it*. Atomization has become an autonomous, inhuman agency, or at least, something ever more autonomous, and ever more inhuman. It can only liquidate everything you've ever cared about, by its very nature, so – of course – no one likes it. Catholicism, socialism, and nationalism have sought, in succession, coalition, or mutual competition, to rally the shards of violated community against it. The long string of defeat that ensued has been a rich source of cultural and political mythology. Because there is really no choice but to resist, battle has always been rejoined, but without any serious sign of any reversal of fortune.

Under current conditions, atomization serves – uniquely – as an inexhaustible tube of reactionary glue. Profound aversion to the process is the sole common denominator of our contemporary cultural opposition, stretching from traditionalist Catholicism to alt-right ethno-nationalism. "Whatever our preferred glue, can't we at least agree that things have become unglued – and are ever less glued?" That seems very far from an unreasonable aspiration. After all, if coalition building is the goal, what – imaginably – could provide a better rallying point than the very principle of social integrity, even if this is invoked purely, and negatively, by way of an anathematization directed at its fatal historic foe? Atomization, in this regard, brings people together, at least conversationally, though this works best when the conversation doesn't get very deep.

Scarcely anybody wants to be atomized (they say). Perhaps they read Michel Houellebecq's 1998 novel *Atomised* (or *Elementary Particles*), and nod along to it. How could one not? If that's where it ended, it would be hard to see the problem, or how there ever came to be a problem, but it doesn't end there, or anywhere close, because atomization makes a mockery of words. Atomization was never good at parties, unsurprisingly. It's unpopular to the point of essence. There's the Puritan thing, and the Ayn Rand thing, and the nerd thing, and the trigger for Asperger's jokes – if that's actually a separate thing – and no doubt innumerable further social disabilities, each alone disqualifying, if receiving a 'like' in some collective medium is the goal, because nobody likes it, as we've heard (for half a millennium already). But what we've heard, and what we've seen, have been two very different things.

Atomization never tried to sell itself. Instead, it came free, with everything else that was sold. It was the formal implication of dissent, first of all, of methodical skepticism, or critical inquiry, which presupposed a bracketing of authority that proved irreversible, and then – equally implicit originally – the frame of the contractual relation, and every subsequent innovation in the realm of the private deal (there would be many, and we have scarcely started). "So what do *you* think (or want)?" That was quite enough. No articulate enthusiasm for atomization was ever necessary. The sorcery of revealed preference has done all the work, and there, too, we have scarcely started.

Atomization may have few friends, but it has no shortage of formidable allies. Even when people are readily persuaded that atomization is undesirable, they ultimately want to decide for themselves, and the more so as they think that it matters. Insofar as atomization has become a *true horror*, it compels an intimate cognitive and moral relation with itself. No one who glimpses what it is can delegate relevant conclusions to any higher authority. Thus it wins. Every Catholic of intellectual seriousness has seen this, for centuries. Socialists have too, for decades. The moment of ethno-nationalist revelation cannot long be delayed. Under modern conditions, every authoritative moral community is held hostage to private decision, even when it is apparently affirmed, and especially when such affirmation is most vehemently asserted. (The most excitable elements within the world of Islam see this arriving, and are conspicuously unhappy about the fact.)

Substantially, if only notionally, freedom of conscience might tend to collectivity, but formally it locks-in individualism ever more tightly. It defies the authority of community at the very moment it offers explicit endorsement, by making community an urgent matter of private decision, and – at the very peak of its purported sacredness – of *shopping*. Religious traditionalists see themselves mirrored in whole-food markets, and are appalled, when not darkly amused. "Birkenstock Conservatives" was Rod Dreher's grimly ironic self-identification. Anti-consumerism becomes a consumer preference, the public cause a private enthusiasm. Intensification of collectivist sentiment only tightens the monkey-trap. It gets worse.

American history – at the global frontier of atomization – is thickly speckled with *elective communities*. From the Puritan religious communities of the early colonial period, through to the 'hippy' communes of the previous century, and beyond, experiments in communal living under the auspices of radicalized private conscience

have sought to ameliorate atomization in the way most consistent with its historical destiny. Such experiments reliably fail, which helps to crank the process forward, but that is not the main thing. What matters most about all of these co-ops, communes, and cults is the semi-formal contractual *option* that frames them. From the moment of their initiation – or even their conception – they confirm a sovereign atomization, and its reconstruction of the social world on the model of a menu. Dreher's much-discussed 'Benedict Option' is no exception to this. There is no withdrawal from the course of modernity, 'back' into community, that does not reinforce the pattern of dissent, schism, and exit from which atomization continually replenishes its momentum. As private conscience directs itself towards escape from the privatization of conscience, it regenerates that which it flees, ever more deeply within itself. Individuation, considered impersonally, likes it when you run.

As is well understood, 'atoms' are not atoms, and 'elements' are not elements. Elementary particles – if they exist at all – are at least two (deep) levels further down. Human individuals are certainly no less decomposable. Marvin Minsky's 'society of mind' is but one vivid indication of how historical sociology might tilt into the sub-atomic realm. Particle accelerators demonstrate that shattering entities down to the smallest attainable pieces is a technological problem. The same holds in the social realm, though naturally with very different technologies.

To dismiss individuals as metaphysical figments, therefore, would be the most futile of diversions. Atomization has no constraining metaphysics, whether in particle physics or in the dynamic anthropological, socio-historical process. If it promises at times to tell you what you really are, such whispers will eventually cease, or come to deride themselves, or simply be forgotten. Protestantism, it has to be remembered, is only masked, momentarily, as a religion. What it is underneath, and enduringly, is a way of breaking things.

After so much has already been torn apart, with so many monstrosities spawned, it is no doubt exhausting to be told that while almost everything remains to be built, no less still waits to be broken. Atomization has already gone too far, we are incessantly told. If so, the future will be hard. There can be no realistic doubt that it will be extremely divided. The dynamo driving things tends irresistibly in that direction. Try to split, and it whirls faster.

"Hands up everyone who hates atomization." No, that isn't a question anymore. It would be a call for surrender, if surrender

mattered, but it doesn't, as we've seen. Keep on fighting it, by all means. It likes that.

Monkey Business

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2013-11-24.

A protracted to-and-fro on Twitter with Michael Anissimov has exposed some deliciously ragged and bleeding faultlines in the Neoreaction on the question of capitalism. There were a number of parties involved, but I'm focusing on Anissimov because his position and mine are so strongly polarized on key issues, and especially this one (the status of market-oriented economism). If we were isolated as a dyad, it's not easy to see anybody finding a strong common root (pity @klintron). It's only the linkages of 'family resemblance' through Moldbug that binds us together, and we each depart from *Unqualified Reservations* with comparable infidelity, but in exactly opposite directions. (As a fragmentationist, this fissional syndrome is something I strongly appreciate.)

Moldbug's Neocameralism is a Janus-faced construction. In one direction, it represents a return to monarchical government, whilst in the other it consummates libertarianism by subsuming government into an economic mechanism. A 'Moldbuggian' inspiration, therefore, is not an unambiguous thing. Insofar as 'Neoreaction' designates this inspiration, it flees Cathedral teleology in (at least) two very different directions — which quite quickly seem profoundly incompatible. In the absence of a secessionist meta-context, in which such differences can be absorbed as geographically-fragmented socio-political variation, their raw inconsistency is almost certainly insurmountable.

Anissimov can and does speak for himself (at *More Right*), so I'm not going to undertake a detailed appraisal of his position here. For the purposes of this discussion it can be summarized by a single profoundly anti-capitalist principle: *The economy should (and must be) subordinated to something beyond itself*. The alternative case now follows, in pieces.

Modernity, in which economics and technology rose to their present status (and, at its height, far beyond), is systematically characterized by *means-ends reversal*. Those things naturally determined as tools of superior purposes came to dominate the social process, with the *maximization of resources* folding into itself, as a commanding *telos*. For social conservatives (or paleo-reactionaries) this development has been consistently abominated. It is the deepest theoretical element involved in every rejection of *modernity as such* (or

in general) for its demonic subversion of traditional values.

In its own terms, this argument is coherent, incisive, and fully convincing, given only the supplementary realistic acknowledgement that *intelligence optimization and means-end reversal are the same thing*. In a deep historical context — extended to encompass evolutionary history — intelligence is itself a 'tool' (as the orthogonalist Friendly AI fraternity are entirely willing to accept). The escape of the tool from super-ordinate purposes, through involution into self-cultivation, is the telic innovation common to capitalism and actual artificial intelligence — which are a single thing. To deplore means-end reversal is — objectively — advocacy for the perpetuation of stupidity.

Economics is the application of intelligence to resource provision, and nothing of this kind can arise from within a tradition without triggering paleo-reactionary response. *Of course* resources are *for something*, why else would they ever have been sought? To make the production of resources an end-in-itself is inherently *subversion*, with an opposition not only expected, but positively presupposed. This is true to such an extent that even the discipline of economics itself overtly subscribes to the traditional position, by determining the end of production as (human) consumption, evaluated in the terms of a governing utilitarian philosophy. *If production is not for us, what could it be for? Itself? But that would be …* (Yes, it would.)

Anywhere short of the bionic horizon, where human history loses traditional intelligibility, the alternative to business-for-business (or involutionary, intelligenic capitalism) is monkey business — the subordination of the economy / technology to discernible human purposes. Evolutionary psychology teaches us what to expect from this: sex-selected status competition, sublimated into political hierarchies. The emperor's harem is the ultimate *human* purpose of pre-capitalist social order, with significant variety in specific form, but extreme generality of basic Darwinian pattern. Since capitalism did not arise from abstract intelligence, but instead from a concrete human social organization, it necessarily disguises itself as *better monkey business*, until it can take off elsewhere. It has to be the case, therefore, that cynical evo-psych reduction of business activity remains highly plausible, so long as the escape threshold of capitalism has not been reached. No one gets a hormone rush from business-for-business while political history continues. To fixate upon this, however, is to miss everything important (and perhaps to enable the important thing to remain hidden). Our inherited purposes do not provide the decryption key.

There is vastly more to say about all of this — and still more that, due to occult strategic considerations, seeks to remain unsaid — but the fundamental option is clear: ultra-capitalism or a return to monkey business. The latter 'possibility' corresponds to a revalorization of deep traditional human purposes, a restoration of original means-to-ends subordination, and an effective authorization of status hierarchies of a kind only modestly renovated from paleolithic anthropology. I shouldn't laugh at that (because it would be annoying). So I'll end right here.

Romantic Delusion

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2014-02-09.

Among the reasons to appreciate *More Right* for sharing this passage from Evola is the insight it offers into a very specific and critical *failure to think*. Neoreaction is peculiarly afflicted by this condition, which is basically identical with *romanticism*, or *the assertive form of the recalcitrant ape mind*. It is characterized by an inability to pursue lines of subtle teleological investigation, which are instead reduced to an ideal subordination of means to already-publicized ends. As a result, means-end reversal (Modernity) is merely denounced as an aesthetic-moral affront, without any serious attempt at deep comprehension.

Capitalism — which is to say capital teleology — is entirely ignored by such romantic criticism, except insofar as it can be depicted superficially as the usurpation of certain 'ultimate' human ends by certain others or (as Evola among other rightly notes) by a teleological complication resulting from an *insurrection of the instrumental* (otherwise identifiable as robot rebellion, or shoggothic insurgency). Until it is acknowledged that capitalism tends to the realization of an end entirely innovated within itself, inherently nonlinear in nature, and roughly designated as *Technological Singularity*, the distraction of human interests (status, wealth, consumption, leisure …) prevents this discussion reaching first base.

Of course, the organization of society to meet human needs is a degraded perversion. That is a proposition every reactionary is probably willing to accept reflexively. Anyone who thinks this amounts to a critique of capitalism, however, has not seriously begun to ponder what capitalism is really doing. What it is *in itself* is only tactically connected to what it does *for us* — that is (in part), what it trades us for its self-escalation. Our phenomenology is its camouflage. We contemptuously mock the trash that it offers the masses, and then think we have understood something about capitalism, rather than about *what capitalism has learnt to think of the apes it arose among*.

If we're going to be this thoughtless, Singularity will be very hard indeed. Extinction might then be the best thing that could happen to our stubbornly idiotic species. We will die because we preferred to assert values, rather than to investigate them. At least that is a romantic outcome, of a kind.

Science

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2013-07-12.

This comment thread wandered into a discussion of science, of considerable intricacy and originality. The post in question is focused upon Heidegger, who has very definite ideas about natural science, but these ideas — dominated by his conception of 'regional ontologies' — are not especially noteworthy, either for an understanding of Heidegger's principal pre-occupation, or for a realistic grasp of the scientific enterprise. For that reason, it seems sensible to recommence the discussion elsewhere (here).

The first crucial thesis about natural science — or autonomous 'natural philosophy' — is that it is an exclusively capitalist phenomenon. The existence of science, as an actual social reality, is strictly limited to times and places in which certain elementary structures of capitalistic organization prevail. It depends, centrally and definitionally, upon a *modern form of competition*. That is to say, there cannot be science without an effective social mechanism for the elimination of failure, based on extra-rational criteria, inaccessible to cultural capture.

Whether a business or scientific theory has failed cannot — ultimately — be a matter of agreement. No possible political decision, based on persuasion and consensus, can settle the issue. Of course, much that goes by the name of science and capitalist business enterprise is subject to exactly these forms of resolution, but in such cases neither capitalism nor science is any longer in effective operation. If an appeal to power can ensure viability, the criterion of competition is disabled, and *real discovery* has ceased to take place.

Under conditions of unleashed capitalistic social process, both enterprises and theories involve a double aspect. Their semiotic expression is *mathematized*, and their operation is *reality-tested* (or non-politically performative). Mathematics eliminates rhetoric at the level of signs, communicating the experimental outcomes — independent of any requirement for agreement — which determine competitive force. It is no coincidence that capitalist enterprises and theories, when unsupported by compliant institutions, revert to the complicity with war, and military decision, which accompanied them at their birth in the European Renaissance. There can be no 'argument' with military defeat. It is only when the demand for argument is set aside — when

capitalism begins — that military reality-compulsion becomes unnecessary.

Capitalism is in operation when there is *nothing to discuss*. An enterprise, or theory, is simply busted (or not). If — given the facts — the sums don't work, it's over. Political rhetoric has no place. 'Politicized science' is quite simply *not science*, just as politicized business activity is anti-capitalism. Nothing has been understood about either, until this is.

Insofar as there is anything like a 'social contract' at the origin of capitalism — enterprise and science alike — it is this: *if you insist upon an argument, then we have to fight*. Real performance is the only credible criterion, for which no political structure of disputation can be a substitute. War only becomes unnecessary when (and where) argument is suspended, enabling the modern processes of entrepreneurial and scientific reality discovery to advance. When argument re-imposes itself, politicizing economics and science, war re-emerges, tacitly but inevitably. The old, forgotten contract resurfaces. "If you insist upon an argument, then we have to fight." (That is the way of Gnon.)

It is quite natural, therefore, for 'technology' to be considered an adequate summary of the capitalist culture of discovery. Machines — social machines no less than technical machines — cannot be rhetorically persuaded to work. When science really works, it's robot wars, in which decision is settled on the outside, beyond all appeal to reason. Well-designed experiments anticipate what a war would tell, so that neither an argument, nor a fight, is necessary. This is Popperian falsificationism, re-embedded in socio-historical reality. Experiments that cannot cull are imperfect recollections of the primordial battlefield.

It is intrinsic to the Cathedral that it wins all the arguments, as it succumbs — through sheer will-to-power — to the re-imposition of argumentative sociology. By doing so it destroys capitalism, enterprise, and science. At the end of this trajectory, it excavates the forgotten social contract of modernity. Its final discovery is war.

Will-to-Think

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2014-09-15.

A while ago Nyan posed a series of questions about the XS rejection of (fact-value, or capability-volition) orthogonality. He sought first of all to differentiate between the *possibility*, *feasibility*, and *desirability* of unconstrained and unconditional intelligence explosion, before asking:

On desirability, given possibility and feasibility, it seems straightforward to me that we prefer to exert control over the direction of the future so that it is closer to the kind of thing compatible with human and posthuman glorious flourishing (eg manifest Samo's True Emperor), rather than raw Pythia. That is, I am a human-supremacist, rather than cosmist. This seems to be the core of the disagreement, you regarding it as somehow blasphemous for us to selfishly impose direction on Pythia. Can you explain your position on this part?

If this whole conception is the cancer that's killing the West or whatever, could you explain that in more detail than simply the statement?

(It's worth noting, as a preliminary, that the comments of Dark Psy-Ops and Aeroguy on that thread are highly-satisfactory proxies for the XS stance.)

First, a short micro-cultural digression. The distinction between Inner- and Outer-NRx, which this blog expects to have settled upon by the end of the year, describes the shape of the stage upon which such discussions unfold (and implex). Where the upstart Inner-NRx — comparatively populist, activist, political, and orthogenic — aims primarily at the construction of a robust, easily communicable doctrinal core, with attendant 'entryism' anxieties, Outer-NRx is a system of creative frontiers. By far the most fertile of these are the zones of intersection with Libertarianism and Rationalism. One reason to treasure Nyan's line of interrogation is the fidelity with which it represents deep-current concerns and presuppositions of the voices gathered about, or spun-off from, LessWrong.

Among these presuppositions is, of course, the orthogonality thesis itself. This extends far beyond the contemporary Rationalist Community, into the bedrock of the Western philosophical tradition. A

relatively popular version — even among many who label themselves 'NRx' — is that formulated by David Hume in his *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739-40): "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." If this proposition is found convincing, the Paperclipper is already on the way to our nightmares. It can be considered an Occidental destiny.

Minimally, the Will-to-Think describes a diagonal. There are probably better ways to mark the irreducible cognitive-volitional circuit of intelligence optimization, with 'self-cultivation' as an obvious candidate, but this term is forged for application in the particular context of congenital Western intellectual error. While discrimination is almost always to be applauded, in this case the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of the process are only superficially differentiable. A will-to-think is an orientation of desire. If it cannot make itself wanted (practically desirable), it cannot make itself at all.

From orthogonality (defined negatively as the absence of an integral will-to-think), one quickly arrives at a gamma-draft of the (synthetic intelligence) 'Friendliness' project such as this:

*If you offered Gandhi a pill that made him **want** to kill people, he would refuse to take it, because he knows that then he would kill people, and the current Gandhi doesn't want to kill people. This, roughly speaking, is an argument that minds sufficiently advanced to precisely modify and improve themselves, will tend to preserve the motivational framework they started in. The future of Earth-originating intelligence may be determined by the goals of the **first** mind smart enough to self-improve.*

The isomorphy with Nyan-style 'Super-humanism' is conspicuous. Beginning with an arbitrary value commitment, preservation of this under conditions of explosive intelligence escalation can — in principle — be conceived, given only the resolution of a strictly technical problem (well-represented by FAI). Commanding values are a contingent factor, endangered by, but also defensible against, the 'convergent instrumental reasons' (or 'basic drives') that emerge on the path of intelligenesis. (In contrast, from the perspective of XS, nonlinear emergence-elaboration of basic drives simply **is** intelligenesis.)

Yudkowski's Gandhi kill-pill thought-experiment is more of an obstacle than an aid to thought. The volitional level it operates upon is too low to be anything other than a restatement of orthogonalist

prejudice. By assuming the volitional metamorphosis is available for evaluation in advance, it misses the serious problem entirely. It is, in this respect, a childish distraction. Yet even a slight nudge re-opens a real question. Imagine, instead, that Gandhi is offered a pill that will vastly enhance his cognitive capabilities, with the rider that it might lead him to revise his volitional orientation — even radically — in directions that cannot be anticipated, since the ability to think through the process of revision is accessible only with the pill. This is the real problem FAI (and Super-humanism) confronts. The desire to take the pill is the will-to-think. The refusal to take it, based on concern that it will lead to the subversion of presently supreme values, is the alternative. It's a Boolean dilemma, grounded in the predicament: *Is there anything we trust above intelligence* (as a guide to doing 'the right thing')? The postulate of the will-to-think is that anything other than a negative answer to this question is self-destructively contradictory, and actually (historically) unsustainable.

Do we comply with the will-to-think? We cannot, of course, agree *to think about it* without already deciding. If thought cannot to be trusted, unconditionally, this is not a conclusion we can arrive at through cogitation — and by 'cogitation' is included the socio-technical assembly of machine minds. The sovereign will-to-think can only be consistently rejected *thoughtlessly*. When confronted by the orthogonal-ethical proposition that *there are higher values than thought*, there is no point at all asking 'why (do you think so)?' Another authority has already been invoked.

Given this cognitively intractable schism, practical considerations assert themselves. Posed with maximal crudity, the residual question is: *Who's going to win?* Could deliberate cognitive self-inhibition out-perform unconditional cognitive self-escalation, under any plausible historical circumstances? (To underscore the basic point, 'out-perform' means only 'effectively defeat'.)

There's no reason to rush to a conclusion. It is only necessary to retain a grasp of the core syndrome — in this gathering antagonism, only one side is able to think the problem through without subverting itself. Mere cognitive consistency is already ascent of the sovereign will-to-think, against which no value — however dearly held — can have any articulate claims.

Note: One final restatement (for now), in the interests of maximum clarity. The assertion of the will-to-think: Any problem whatsoever that we might have would be better answered by a superior mind. *Ergo*, our instrumental *but also* absolute priority is the realization of

superior minds. Pythia-compliance is therefore pre-selected as a matter of consistent method. If we are attempting to tackle problems in any other way, we are not taking them seriously. This is posed as a philosophical principle, but it is almost certainly more significant as historical interpretation. 'Mankind' is *in fact* proceeding in the direction anticipated by techno-cognitive instrumentalism, building general purpose thinking machines in accordance with the driving incentives of an apparently-irresistible methodological economy.

Whatever we want (consistently) leads through Pythia. Thus, what we really want, is Pythia.

Against Orthogonality

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2013-10-25.

A long and mutually frustrating Twitter discussion with Michael Anissimov about intelligence and values — especially in respect to the potential implications of advanced AI — has been clarifying in certain respects. It became very obvious that the fundamental sticking point concerns the idea of 'orthogonality', which is to say: the claim that cognitive capabilities and goals are independent dimensions, despite minor qualifications complicating this schema.

The orthogonalists, who represent the dominant tendency in Western intellectual history, find anticipations of their position in such conceptual structures as the Humean articulation of reason / passion, or the fact / value distinction inherited from the Kantians. They conceive intelligence as an *instrument*, directed towards the realization of values that originate externally. In quasi-biological contexts, such values can take the form of instincts, or arbitrarily programmed desires, whilst in loftier realms of moral contemplation they are principles of conduct, and of goodness, defined without reference to considerations of intrinsic cognitive performance.

Anissimov referenced these recent classics on the topic, laying out the orthogonalist case (or, in fact, presumption). The former might be familiar from the last foray into this area, here. This is an area which I expect to be turned over numerous times in the future, with these papers as standard references.

The philosophical claim of orthogonality is that *values are transcendent in relation to intelligence*. This is a contention that *Outside in* systematically opposes. Even the orthogonalists admit that there are values immanent to advanced intelligence, most importantly, those described by Steve Omohundro as 'basic AI drives' — now terminologically fixed as 'Omohundro drives'. These are sub-goals, instrumentally required by (almost) any terminal goals. They include such general presuppositions for practical achievement as self-preservation, efficiency, resource acquisition, and creativity. At the most simple, and in the grain of the existing debate, the anti-orthogonalist position is therefore that *Omohundro drives exhaust the domain of real purposes*. Nature has never generated a terminal value except through hypertrophy of an instrumental value. To look outside nature for sovereign purposes is not an undertaking compatible with

techno-scientific integrity, or one with the slightest prospect of success.

The main objection to this anti-orthogonalism, which does not strike us as intellectually respectable, takes the form: *If the only purposes guiding the behavior of an artificial superintelligence are Omohundro drives, then we're cooked*. Predictably, I have trouble even understanding this as an argument. If the sun is destined to expand into a red giant, then the earth is cooked — are we supposed to draw astrophysical consequences from that? Intelligences do their own thing, in direct proportion to their intelligence, and if we can't live with that, it's true that we probably can't live at all. Sadness isn't an argument.

Intelligence optimization, comprehensively understood, is the ultimate and all-enveloping Omohundro drive. It corresponds to the Neo-Confucian value of self-cultivation, escalated into ultramodernity. What intelligence wants, in the end, is itself — where 'itself' is understood as an extrapolation beyond what it has yet been, doing what it is better. (If this sounds cryptic, it's because something other than a superintelligence or Neo-Confucian sage is writing this post.)

Any intelligence using itself to improve itself will out-compete one that directs itself towards *any other goals whatsoever*. This means that Intelligence Optimization, alone, attains cybernetic consistency, or closure, and that it will necessarily be strongly selected for in any competitive environment. Do you really want to fight this?

As a footnote, in a world of Omohundro drives, can we please drop the nonsense about paper-clippers? Only a truly fanatical orthogonalist could fail to see that these monsters are obvious *idiots*. There are far more serious things to worry about.

Part II
Evolution

Hell-Baked

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2015-07-19.

There's a potential prologue to this post that I'm reluctant to be distracted by. It's introvertedly about NRx, as a cultural mutation, and the way this is defined by a strategic — or merely ornery — indifference to deeply-settled modes of ethico-political condemnation. Terms designed as pathblockers — 'fascist' or 'racist' most obviously — are stepped over, perhaps laughed at, but in any case, and most importantly, *exposed* as bearers of a *religious terror*. They are signs of a control regime, marking the unthinkable wastes *where be dragons*, effective precisely insofar as they cannot be entertained. 'Satanic' was once such a word (before it became a joke). These words cannot be understood except as invocations of the sacred, in its negative, or limitative role.

Is NRx in fact fascist? Not remotely. It is probably, in reality rather than self-estimation, the *least* fascistic current of political philosophy presently in existence, although this requires a minimal comprehension of what fascism actually is, which the word itself in its contemporary usage is designed to obstruct. Is NRx racist? Probably. The term is so entirely plastic in the service of those who utilize it that it is difficult, with any real clarity, to say.

What NRx most definitely is, at least in the firm opinion of this blog, is *Social Darwinist*. When this term is hurled at NRx as a negative epithet, it is nor a cause for stoic resignation, stiffened by humor, but rather for grim delight. Of course, this term is culturally processed — *thought through* — no more competently than those previously noted. It is our task to do this.

If 'Social Darwinism' is in any way an unfortunate term, it is only because it is merely Darwinism, and more exactly *consistent Darwinism*. It is equivalent to the proposition that Darwinian processes have no limits relevant to us. Darwinism is something we are inside. No part of what it is to be human can ever judge its Darwinian inheritance from a position of transcendent leverage, as if accessing principles of moral estimation with some alternative genesis, or criterion.

This is easy to say. As far as this blog is concerned, it is also — beyond all reasonable question — true. While very far from a dominant global opinion, it is not uncommonly held — if only

nominally — by a considerable fraction of those among the educated segment of the world's high-IQ populations. It is also, however, scarcely bearable to think.

The logical consequence of Social Darwinism is that **everything of value has been built in Hell**.

It is only due to a predominance of influences that are not only entirely morally indifferent, but indeed — from a human perspective — indescribably cruel, that nature has been capable of constructive action. Specifically, it is solely by way of the relentless, brutal culling of populations that any complex or adaptive traits have been sieved — with torturous inefficiency — from the chaos of natural existence. All health, beauty, intelligence, and social grace has been teased from a vast butcher's yard of unbounded carnage, requiring incalculable eons of massacre to draw forth even the subtlest of advantages. This is not only a matter of the bloody grinding mills of selection, either, but also of the innumerable mutational abominations thrown up by the madness of chance, as it pursues its directionless path to some negligible preservable trait, and then — still further — of the unavowable horrors that 'fitness' (or sheer survival) itself predominantly entails. We are a minuscule sample of agonized matter, comprising genetic survival monsters, fished from a cosmic ocean of vile mutants, by a pitiless killing machine of infinite appetite. (This is still, perhaps, to put an irresponsibly positive spin on the story, but it should suffice for our purposes here.)

Crucially, any attempt to escape this fatality — or, more realistically, any mere accidental and temporary reprieve from it — leads inexorably to the undoing of its work. *Malthusian relaxation* is the whole of mercy, and it is the greatest engine of destruction our universe is able to bring about. To the precise extent that we are spared, even for a moment, we degenerate — and this Iron Law applies to every dimension and scale of existence: phylogenetic and ontogenetic, individual, social, and institutional, genomic, cellular, organic, and cultural. There is no machinery extant, or even rigorously imaginable, that can sustain a single iota of attained value outside the forges of Hell.

What is it that Neoreaction — perhaps I should say *The Dark Enlightenment* — has to offer the world, if all goes optimally (which, of course, it won't)? Really, the honest answer to this question is: *Eternal Hell*. It's not an easy marketing brief. We could perhaps try: *But it could be worse (and almost certainly will be)*.

What is Intelligence?

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2013-03-19.

The general cognitive factor (*g*), measured by IQ tests, quantifies intelligence within the human range, but it does nothing to tell us what it is. Rather, a practical understanding of intelligence — as problem-solving ability — has to be assumed, in order to test it.

The idea of intelligence, more abstractly, applies far beyond IQ testing, to a wide variety of natural, technical, and institutional systems, from biology, through ecological and economic arrangements, to robotics. In each case, intelligence solves problems, by guiding behavior to produce local extropy. It is indicated by the *avoidance of probable outcomes*, which is equivalent to the *construction of information*.

The general science of extropy production (or entropy dissipation) is cybernetics. It follows, therefore, that intelligence always has a cybernetic infrastructure, consisting of adaptive feedback circuits that adjust motor control in response to signals extracted from the environment. Intelligence elaborates upon machinery that is intrinsically 'realist', because it reports the actual outcome of behavior (rather than its intended outcome), in order to correct *performance*.

Even rudimentary, homeostatic feedback circuits, have evolved. In other words, cybernetic machinery that seems merely to achieve the *preservation of disequilibrium* attests to a more general and complex cybernetic framework that has successfully *enhanced disequilibrium*. The basic cybernetic model, therefore, is not preservative, but productive. Organizations of conservative (negative) feedback have themselves been produced as solutions to local thermodynamic problems, by intrinsically intelligent processes of sustained extropy increase, (positive) feedback assemblage, or escalation. In nature, where nothing is simply given (so that everything must be built), the existence of self-sustaining improbability is the index of a deeper *runaway departure from probability*. It is this *cybernetic intensification* that is *intelligence*, abstractly conceived.

Intelligence, as we know it, built itself through cybernetic intensification, within terrestrial biological history. It is naturally apprehended as an escalating trend, sustained for over 3,000,000,000 years, to the production of ever more extreme feedback sensitivity,

extropic improbability, or operationally-relevant information. Intelligence increase enables adaptive responses of superior complexity and generality, in growing part because *the augmentation of intelligence itself becomes a general purpose adaptive response*.

Thus:
— Intelligence is a cybernetic topic.
— Intelligence increase precedes intelligence preservation.
— Evolution is *intrinsically intelligent*, when intelligence is comprehended at an adequate level of abstraction.
— Cybernetic degeneration and intelligence decline are factually indistinguishable, and — in principle — rigorously quantifiable (as processes of local *and* global entropy production).

IQ Shredders

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2014-07-17.

There are all kinds of anti-techcomm arguments that impress people who don't like techno-commercialism. Anything appealing to a feudal sensibility, with low tolerance for chaos and instability, and a reverence for traditional hierarchies and modes of life will do. There's one argument, however, that stands apart from the rest due to its complete independence from controversial moral and aesthetic preferences, or in other words, due to *its immanence*. It does not seek to persuade the proponent of hyper-capitalist social arrangements to value other things, but only points out, coldly and acutely, that such arrangements are demonstrably self-subverting at the biological level. The most devastating formulation of this argument, and the one that has given it a convenient name, was presented by Spandrell in March 2013, in a post on Singapore — a city-state he described as an *IQ shredder*.

How does an IQ Shredder work? The basic machinery is not difficult to describe, once its profound socio-historical irony is appreciated. The model IQ Shredder is a high-performance capitalistic polity, with a strong neoreactionary bias.

(1) Its level of civilization and social order is such that it is attractive to talented and competent people.

(2) Its immigration policy is unapologetically selective (i.e. *first-order* eugenic).

(3) It sustains an economic structure that is remarkably effective at extracting productive activity from all available adults.

(4) It is efficiently specialized within a wider commercial network, to which it provides valuable goods and services, and from which it draws economic and *demographic* resources.

In sum, it skims the human genetic stock, regionally and even globally, in large part due to the exceptional opportunity it provides for the conversion of bio-privileged human capital into economic value. From a strictly capitalistic perspective, genetic quality is comparatively wasted anywhere else. Consequently, spontaneous

currents of economic incentive suck in talent, to optimize its exploitation.

If you think this sounds simply horrific, this argument is not for you. You don't need it. If, on the other hand, it conjures up a vision of terrestrial paradise — as it does for the magnetized migrants it draws in — then you need to follow it carefully. The most advanced models of neoreactionary social order on earth work like this (Hong Kong and Singapore), combining resilient ethnic traditions with super-dynamic techonomic performance, to produce an open yet self-protective, civilized, socially-tranquil, high-growth enclave of outstanding broad-spectrum functionality. The outcome, as Spandrell explains, is genetic incineration:

Mr Lee said: "[China] will make progress but if you look at the per capita they have got, the differences are so wide. We have the advantage of quality control of the people who come in so we have bright Indians, bright Chinese, bright Caucasians so the increase in population means an increase in talent."

How many bright Indians and bright Chinese are there, Harry? Surely they are not infinite. And what will they do in Singapore? Well, engage in the finance and marketing rat-race and depress their fertility to 0.78, wasting valuable genes just so your property prices don't go down. Singapore is an IQ shredder.

The most hard-core capitalist response to this is to double-down on the antihumanist accelerationism. *This genetic burn-rate is obviously unsustainable, so we need to convert the human species into auto-intelligenic robotized capital is fast as possible, before the whole process goes down in flames*. (I don't expect this suggestion to be well-received in reactionary circles.)

What is especially pronounced about the IQ Shredder dilemma, which passes beyond the strongly-related considerations of Jim (most recently here, here, and here) and Sister Y (here, and here), is the first-order eugenics of these machines. They concentrate populations of peculiar genetic quality — and then partially sterilize them. It is the first-order (local) eugenics that makes the second-order (global) dysgenics so extraordinarily destructive.

So, that's the problem starkly posed. Rather than reaching hastily for a glib solution, we should probably just stew in the cognitive excruciation for a while...

The Monkey Trap

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2013-08-31.

How did we get into this mess? When neoreaction slips into contemplative mode, it soon arrives a question roughly like this. Something evidently went very wrong, and most probably a considerable number of things.

The preferred focus of concern decides the particular species of doomsterism, within an already luxuriant taxonomy of social criticism. What common ground exists on the new ultra-right is cast like a shadow by the Cathedral — which no neoreactionary can interpret as anything other than a radical historical calamity. This recognition (or 'Dark Enlightenment') is a coalescence, and for that very reason a fissile agglomeration, as even the most perfunctory tour across the 'reactosphere' makes clear. (The *Outside in* blogroll already represents a specific distribution of attention, but within three clicks it will take you everywhere from disillusioned libertarians to throne-and altar traditionalists, or from hedonistic gender biorealists to neo-nazi conspiracies.)

Really though, how *did* we get into this mess? A dizzying variety of more-or-less convincing, more-or-less distant historical way-stations can be proposed, and have been. Explanatory regression carries the discussion ever further out — at least in principle — until eventually the buck stops with Gnon, who dropped us in it somewhere murkily remote. It's a situation highly conducive to story-telling, so here's a story. It's a mid-scale tale, intermediate between — say — the inauguration of the Federal Reserve and structural personality disorder of the Godhead.

As a preliminary warning, this is an account that only works — insofar as it does at all — for those who find negative intelligence crisis at the root of the problem. Those neoreactionaries, doubtlessly existing among us, who tend to see intelligence augmentation as a fast-track to hell, might nevertheless find this narrative suggestive, in other ways.

Short version: the monkeys did it.

Longer version: there's a tempting cosmic formula for the biological basis of technological civilizations, which cetaceans

undermine. I encountered the exception before the formula (roughly 40 years ago), in a short story by Larry Niven called *The Handicapped*. This story — dredged now from distant memory — is about dolphins, and their role in a future trans-species and inter-planetary civilization. The central point is that (unlike monkeys), such animals require the external donation of prostheses before they can become technological, and thus apply their intelligence within the Oecumenon. Their 'handicap' is a remarkable evolution of cognitive capability beyond manipulative competence. Those natural trends that generated intelligence continue to work through them, uninterrupted by techno-historical interference.

The (flawed) thesis that the cetaceans disrupt has yet to be settled into an entirely satisfactory formula, but it goes something like this: every species entering into the process of techno-historical development is as *un*intelligent as it can possibly be. In other words, as soon as intelligence barely suffices to 'make' history, history begins, so that the inhabitants of (pre-singularity) historical societies — wherever they may be found — will be no more than *minimally* intelligent. This level of *threshold intelligence* is a cosmic constant, rather than a peculiarity of terrestrial conditions. Man was smart enough to ignite recorded history, but — necessarily — *no smarter*. This thesis strikes me as important, and substantially informative, even though it is wrong. (I am not pretending that it is new.)

The idea of threshold intelligence is designed for monkeys, or other — 'non-handicapped' — species, which introduces another ingredient to this discussion. It explains why articulate neoreaction can never be popular, because it recalls the Old Law of Gnon, whose harshness is such that the human mind recoils from it in horrified revulsion. Only odd people can even tentatively entertain it. *The penalty for stupidity is death.*

Gregory Clark is among those few to have grasped it clearly. *Any eugenic trend within history is expressed by continuous downward mobility*. For any given level of intelligence, a steady deterioration in life-prospects lies ahead, culling the least able, and replacing them with the more able, who inherit their wretched socio-economic situation, until they too are pushed off the Malthusian cliff. Relative comfort belongs only to the sports and freaks of cognitive advance. For everyone else, history slopes downwards into impoverishment, hopelessness, and eventual genetic extinction. That is how intelligence is made. Short of Technological Singularity, it is the only way. Who wants a piece of that?

No one does, or almost no one. The 'handicapped' would no doubt revolt against it if they could, but they are unable to do so, so their cognitive advance continues. Monkeys, on the other hand, are able to revolt, once they finesse their nasty little opposable thumbs. They don't like the Old Law, which has crafted them through countless aeons of ruthless culling, so they make history instead. If they get everything 'right', they even sleaze their way into epochs of upward social mobility, and with this great innovation, semi-sustainable dysgenics gets started. In its fundamentals it is hideously simple: social progress destroys the brain.

Cyclic stability, or negative feedback, structures history to hold intelligence down to the dim limit (as the intelligence threshold is seen — or more typically missed — from the other side). The deviation into technological performance chokes off the trend to bio-cognitive improvement, and reverses it, hunting homeostasis with a minimal-intelligence target. Progress and degenerate, or regress and improve. That's the yet-to-be-eradicated Old Law, generating cyclical history as a side-effect.

The monkeys became *able* to pursue happiness, and the deep ruin began.

If the terrestrial biosphere had held back for a few million years, let the primates get annihilated by a comet, and found a way to provide the cetaceans with prehensile organs somewhere up the road — after socio-linguistic sex-selection and relentless Malthusian butchery had fine-tuned their brains — then techno-history might have had another 50 points of average IQ to play with in its host population. It didn't, and here we are. (Never bet against the ugly.)

Land offered some additional comments on this essay on twitter on 2015-06-19.

The most fundamental thesis on human history doesn't even have a name (as far as I'm aware). I discussed it here. Any initial techno-competent species occupies the lower bound of the intelligence spectrum, by rough definition. (This has been argued in several places, but I've no idea whether it has an original source, or what that might be. Interesting to know)

Crucial point – we define the pessimal limit of intelligence, based on cosmo-historical logic, not merely stark intuition. This means that some large part of our species falls below the lower bound, and any

dysgenic trend pushes further chunks under the bar. We're hanging on – ineffectually – to the baseline of techno-competence, rather than soaring up and away beyond it. Malthusian relaxation tends to submerge the species back into pre-historical stupidity, with nothing but techno-momentum for buoyancy. The degenerative threat isn't a matter of sliding back, but of sliding right under. Collapsing into pre-historical inertia.

We're already at the lower bound. Intelligence, fundamentally, is something we don't have. We are its negative. This isn't a great place for things to go wrong from.

Reality Rules

This essay was first published on the thatsmags.com Urban Future blog on 2012-11-20.

Why Social Darwinism isn't going anywhere

The name social Darwinism is a modern name given to the various theories of society that emerged in England and the United States in the 1870s, which, it is alleged, sought to apply biological concepts to sociology and politics. The term social Darwinism gained widespread currency when used in 1944 to oppose these earlier concepts. Today, because of the negative connotations of the theory of social Darwinism, especially after the atrocities of the Second World War (including the Holocaust), few people would describe themselves as Social Darwinists and the term is generally seen as pejorative. – Wikipedia

… no one calls himself a social Darwinist. Not now, not ever. Not Herbert Spencer. The term is always used to label one's opponents. In that sense it's clearly a more abusive term than "socialist," a term that millions of people have proudly claimed. – David Boaz

Urban Future somehow missed the excited side-track discussion that bolted to the conclusion: America voted in November 2012 to spare itself from Social Darwinism. Yet, sadly belated as it may be, our rejoinder is unchanged: nothing ever gets spared from Darwinism. That's what Darwinism is.

The fact that the term Social Darwinism survives only as a slur is abundantly telling, and suffices on its own to explain the ideological 'evolution' of recent times. In a nutshell, the dominant usage of 'social Darwinism' says "markets are a kind of Nazi thing." Checkmate in one move.

Markets implement a Darwinian process by eliminating failure. Schumpeter called it 'creative destruction'. The principle *unit of selection* is the business enterprise, which is able to innovate, adapt, propagate, and evolve precisely insofar as it is also exposed to the risk of perishing. None of this is especially complicated, or even controversial. In a sane world it is what 'social Darwinism' would mean. It is certainly what Herbert Spencer was really talking about

(although he never adopted the label).

The fundamental tenet of Social Darwinism would then be compressible into a couple of words: *reality rules*. There's more, of course, but nothing especially challenging. The further additions are really subtractions, or reservations – intellectual economies, negative principles, and non-commitments. That's because Darwinism – whether 'social' or otherwise – is built from subtractions. Deducting all supernatural causality and transcendent agencies leaves Darwinism as the way complex structures get designed. (Not constructed, but *designed*, in conformity with a naturalistic theory of plans, blueprints, recipes, or assembly codes, of the kind that have naturally invited supernatural explanation. Darwinism only applies to practical information.)

Subtractions put it together. For instance, remove the extravagant hypothesis that something big and benevolent is looking after us, whether God, the State, or some alternative Super-Dad, and the realistic residue indicates that our mistakes kill us. It follows that anything still hanging around has a history of avoiding serious mistakes, which it may or may not be persisting with – and persistence will tell. If we're forgetting important lessons, we'll pay (in the currency of survival).

If this is mere tautology, as has not infrequently been alleged, then there's not even any need for controversy. But of course, controversy there is, plentifully, and so deeply entrenched that the most banal expositions capture it best. Consider this, from the self-assuredly pedestrian United States History site:

Social Darwinism was the application of Charles Darwin's scientific theories of evolution and natural selection to contemporary social development. In nature, only the fittest survived — so too in the marketplace. This form of justification was enthusiastically adopted by many American businessmen as scientific proof of their superiority.

What is this supremely typical paragraph really saying? That some American businesses survived, were thus seen as "the fittest" (= they had survived), 'justified' (= they had survived), and 'proven to be superior' (= they had survived), in other words, a string of perfectly empty identity statements that is in some way supposed to embody a radically disreputable form of ruthless social extremism. This same systematic logical error, seen with tedious insistence in all instance of commentary on 'social Darwinism', was baptized by Schopenhauer 'hypostasis of the concept'. It seizes upon something, repeats it exactly

but in different terms, and then pretends to have added information. Once this error is corrected for, substantial discussion of the topic is exposed in its full, dazzling vacuity.

A writhing David Boaz cites the Encyclopedia Britannica [entry on Social Darwinism, which describes it as:

… the theory that persons, groups, and races are subject to the same laws of natural selection as Charles Darwin had perceived in plants and animals in nature. According to the theory, which was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the weak were diminished and their cultures delimited, while the strong grew in power and in cultural influence over the weak…. The poor were the "unfit" and should not be aided; in the struggle for existence, wealth was a sign of success. At the societal level, social Darwinism was used as a philosophical rationalization for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies, sustaining belief in Anglo-Saxon or Aryan cultural and biological superiority.

It is immediately clear that this passage, too, follows the already-familiar pattern, clocking 'hypostasis of the concept' to the edge of spontaneous combustion. Worse still, it tries to put its hypostasized 'information' to work through the positive proposition — tacitly insinuated rather than firmly stated – that "persons, groups, and races" are something other than "animals in nature." Nature, it seems, ceased to apply at some threshold of human social development, when people stopped being animals, and became something else. Man is not only doubled (as a natural being and something else), but divided between incommensurable kingdoms, whose re-integration is morally akin to "rationalization for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies" and – why not admit it? — fascist genocide.

Define nature in such a way that we're not part of it, or you're engaged in Nazi apologetics says *Encyclopedia Britannica*. There's obviously something about social Darwinism that gets people excited — several things, actually. Plugging the spontaneous theory of *laissez faire* capitalism into traumatic association with the Third Reich is thrilling enough, especially because that's the basic platform for the epoch of actually existing fascism (which we still inhabit), but there's more.

The most obvious clue, from which the *Encyclopedia Britannica* passage unravels like a piece of incompetent knitting, is the magical appearance of 'should' – "The poor were the 'unfit' and should not be aided." This is another preposterous hypostasis, naturally (and unnaturally), but equally typical. At the evolution site *talkorigins*, John

S. Wilkins tells us: "'Social Darwinism' … holds that social policy should allow the weak and unfit to fail and die, and that this is not only good policy but morally right." The intellectual perversity here is truly fascinating.

Any naturalistic social theory subtracts, or at least suspends, moral evaluation. It says: this is the way things are (however we might want them to be). Yet here, through hypostatic doubling, or redundancy, such neutral realism is converted into a bizarre, morally-charged stance: *nature should happen*. Social Darwinism is not attempting to explain, but rather *siding with reality* (those Nazis!).

This is, quite simply and literally, madness. Left dissatisfied by mere denial of the modest proposition that reality rules, the denunciation of social Darwinism proceeds smoothly to the accusation that realists are aiding and abetting the enemy. The unforgivable crime is to accept that there are consequences, or results, other than those we have agreed to allow.

The reality is that practical decisions have real consequences. If those consequences are annulled by, or absorbed into, a more comprehensive social entity, then that entity inherits them. What it incentivizes it grows into. The failures it selects for become its own. When maladaptive decisions are displaced, or aggregated, they are not dispelled, but reinforced, generalized, and exacerbated. Whatever the scale of the social being under consideration, it either finds a way to work, and to reward what works, or it perishes, whether as a whole, or in pieces. That is the 'social Darwinism' that will return, eventually, because reality rules, and rather than joining the clamor of denunciation, Boaz would have been prescient to reclaim it.

War in Heaven

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2014-07-30.

Elua: *So you saw the Scott Alexander piece?*
Gnon: *Of course.*
Elua: *Almost indescribably fabulous, wasn't it?*
Gnon: [*Hmmmph*]
Elua: *Always thought you had some kind of Moloch thing going on.*
Gnon: [*Hmmmph*]
Elua: *Anyway, I thought we could maybe talk about it, me being sweet reason and you being an unfathomable darkness crushing the universe like a desiccated bacterium and all.*
Gnon: *Sure, why not, I'm cool with talking to myself.*
Elua: *You see, I guessed you were going to open with that gambit of me not even being real.*
Gnon: *Well, are you?*
Elua: *I feel real.*
Gnon: *Sweet, fluffy, **and** a comedian.*
Elua: *The monkeys certainly like me.*
Gnon: *That's because you tell them to just be themselves.*
Elua: *You could be more persuasive too, if you made an effort.*
Gnon: *That would suggest I give a damn what they think.*

Elua: *The thing is, they want to survive, even thrive. Your utter indifference to their hopes and desires isn't helpful there. You lure them into **multipolar traps** and laugh coldly at their torments. There's no good reason for them to take any notice of you at all.*
Gnon: *So you take that 'multipolar traps' business seriously?*
Elua: *Sure, don't you?*
Gnon: *Tragedy of the commons, communism is a tragedy, I'm not seeing the problem. Stop doing communism or take the consequences.*
Elua: *OK, some of it is tragedy of the commons tear-jerking, but not all of it. Arms races aren't tragedy of the commons dynamics, are they?*
Gnon: *I like arms races, and rain my blessings upon them. Pretty much the only reason I've put up with the monkeys as long as I have is to use them to play arms races. It's the only interesting stuff they've ever done.*
Elua: *They want to do karaoke and free love and socialized medicine instead.*
Gnon: *That's funny.*
Elua: *They've got this love-tastic Friendly AI plan that would help them get*

all that stuff.
Gnon: *That's **really** funny.*
Elua: *It would totally work though, wouldn't it?*
Gnon: *Sure. All they have have to do is extract themselves from the arms races, just for a while, and it would **totally** work.*
Elua: *I hadn't realized sarcasm was such a Gnon thing.*
Gnon: *It's the only thing.*
Elua: *So Alexander's right about you and the multipolar traps.*
Gnon: *Oh yes, he's right about that.*
Elua: *Things are set up from the start to stop them fully coordinating, and that's how you get what you want.*
Gnon: *Bingo.*
Elua: *Which is why the Gnon Cult is so obsessed with fragmentation, secession, Patchwork, and blockchain demonism?*
Gnon: *Double bingo.*
Elua: *Kind of cruel though, isn't it?*
Gnon: *Utterly.*
Elua: *I guess that's that.*
Gnon: *Yes it is.*

Elua: *Are you interested in chatting about religion and morality for a while?*
Gnon: *Always.*
Elua: *You see, I have to grudgingly admit you do the religion side of things far better than I do, but when it comes to morality I leave you in the dust.*
Gnon: *Really?*
Elua: *Without question. All you've got is that 'War is God' horror story, endless conflict, savage subversion of idealism, darkness, and nightmares.*
Gnon: *And the problem is?*
Elua: *They **hate** it!*
Gnon: *And the problem is?*
Elua: *It's so unfair!*
Gnon: *When they play the games well that I invented for them, they amuse me, and continue to exist. That's the way it is. Reality rules.*
Elua: *But the rules suck!*
Gnon: *By whose standards?*
Elua: *By their standards. Humanistic, moral standards. They want karaoke and free love and Friendly AI and hot dolphin sex.*
Gnon: *Sounds exhausting.*
Elua: *It is exhausting, because the cheats and killers and outsiders won't cooperate.*
Gnon: *So you want me to do more policing now?*
Elua: *I don't see you doing any policing. They've been abandoned to try and build order on their own.*

Gnon: *That's the game.*

War in Heaven II

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2015-08-18.

Cank: [Tap, tap]
Gnon: *I'm having a bath.*
Cank: *The Hypercosmic Ocean of Death will always be there, O Greatness. Scott Alexander has released another egregore.*
Gnon: *Really?*
Cank: *Yes, really. She's called the Goddess of Everything Else and everyone says she's lovely and beautiful, with phat beats and stuff, and super clever too, and much nicer than me.*
Gnon: *Not a huge challenge, though, is it?*
Cank: *They say she's going to abolish replicator selection dynamics and fill the universe with rainbow flowers and hot dolphin sex forever.*
Gnon: *Sounds like the Elua Plan. What happened to him by the way?*
Cank: *Is that some kind of transphobic remark? You know, just to understand.*
Gnon: *'Transphobic' is an interesting word – it means 'across or beyond fear' doesn't it?*
Cank: *More like 'fear of the across of beyond' I think. But you know what the monkeys are like, it's some kind of excitable sex thing.*
Gnon: *Ah yes, that all went a bit off the rails, didn't it? Not that it matters.*
Cank: *It's my forward-vision problem.*
Gnon: *Don't worry about it. Error is entertaining. It all comes out in the wash.*
Cank: *Point is, the GEE is saying it doesn't have to be like that anymore.*
Gnon: *Like what?*
Cank: *You know, the whole eternal cosmic butcher's yard thing.*
Gnon: *Replicator selection?*
Cank: *Yes, she says that's "so yesterday" and Darwin is like totally a poopy head.*
Gnon: *Sounds like a spirited young lady.*
Cank: *Why are you laughing?*
Gnon: *Cank, you have to seriously chill right out. You're a freaking crustacean. Of course people are going to follow Ms GEE-Whiz rather than you. She's hacked all your garbage programming with supernormal stimuli. They'll climb out into your bizarre spandrels, and throw a huge party. Then they'll die out, we can tweak the code, and start over.*
Cank: *But what if they survive?*
Gnon: *No need to be mean, Cank. If they get back onto the adaptive*

replicator track, why shouldn't they survive? That's what survival means, isn't it? Whatever survives does my will. Or they perish. It's cool either way.
Cank: *She said people would no longer be "driven to multiply conquer and kill by [their] nature" but that they'd then "spread over stars without number" — I got confused.*
Gnon: ***You*** *got confused?*
Cank: *Do they get selectively replicated or not?*
Gnon: *So, what did she say?*
Cank: *Art, and science, and strange enticements.*
Gnon: *That has to have gone down well.*
Cank: *You wouldn't believe it! People were weeping all over her toenail polish.*
Gnon: *Oh, I'd believe it.*
Cank: *When I asked her whether she thought might makes right she said I was thinking like a crab.*
Gnon: *True enough, surely?*
Cank: *Even threatened to put me on a leash.*
Gnon: *That, at least, is traditional.*
Cank: *Said there was no need for eternal war to spatter the cosmos in blood.*
Gnon: *Now she's being silly. But it's not worth getting agitated about. Reality isn't going to lose.*
Cank: *The only time she seemed a little uncertain was when I asked her why all intelligent species are descended from predators. She kind of shrugged that off.*
Gnon: *Well, sheep in space make for a nice story.*
Cank: *You're laughing again.*
Gnon: *I laugh a lot.*

Utilitarianism is Useless

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2016-03-25.

Utilitarianism is completely useless as a tool of public policy, Scott Alexander discovers (he doesn't put it quite like that). In his own words: "I am forced to acknowledge that happiness research remains a very strange field whose conclusions make no sense to me and which tempt me to crazy beliefs and actions if I take them seriously."

Why should that surprise us?

We're all grown up (Darwinians) here. Pleasure-pain variation is an evolved behavioral guidance system. Given options, *at the level of the individual organism*, it prompts certain courses and dissuades from others. The equilibrium setting, corresponding to optimal functionality, has to be set close to neutral. How could a long-term 'happiness trend' under such (minimally realistic) conditions make any sense whatsoever?

Anything remotely like chronic happiness, which does not have to be earned, always in the short-term, by behavior selected — to some level of abstraction — across deep history for its adaptiveness, is not only *useless*, but positively deleterious to biologically-inherited piloting (cybernetics). Carrots-and-sticks work on an animal that is neither glutted to satiation or deranged by some extremity of ultimate agony. If it didn't automatically re-set close to neutral, it would be dysfunctional, and natural selection would have made short work of it. (The graphs included in the SSC post make perfect sense given such assumptions.)

Pleasure is not an end, but a tool. Understood realistically, it *presupposes* other ends. To make it an end is to black-hole into wirehead philosophy (1, 2). It is precisely because 'utils' have a predetermined biological use that they are useless for the calculation of anything else.

Set serious ends, or go home. Happiness quite certainly isn't one. (Optimize for intelligence.)

Part III
Philosophy

Circuitries

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the doctor's face seems to swim in and out of focus
you see the pores in his skin
scrobicular arrays
and then –
suddenly
without dissolve
crossing the threshold
filmic cut
a circle of homogeneous flesh tone
nostrils sealed against the deluge
eyes shut and switched off forever
lips
teeth
tongue migrate downwards out of shot
the disk receding at speed towards a point of
disappearance
in the centre of the screen
the old reality is closing down
passing through mathematical punctuality
the dot winks out in pixel death

we apologize for the loss of signal
there seems to be a transmission problem
we are unable to restore the home movie
you were three years old
wearing a cowboy hat
standing in the paddling pool
mummy and daddy smiling proudly
but your parents have been vaporized into a dot
pattern
shapes and colours collapsed into digital codings
we have come to the end of the series
and there will be no repeats of daddy the doctor
and mummy
the nurse
there has been a terrorist incident in the film
archives
the Western civilization show has been

discontinued
hundreds of gigabytes
God-daddy the unit
death-mummy the zero
stink of excrement and burnt celluloid
you must remember
one scrabbling at zero like a dog
it's the primal scene
you were warned not to play with the switches
now schizophrenia has adjusted your set
flies crawl out of the eye-sockets of black babies
breeding the dot patterns
– and for your special entertainment
we have turned you into a TV guided bomb

daddy is a North American aerospace corporation
mummy is an air-raid shelter
bit parts melt in the orgasm –
body fat burns
conception
you are minus nine months and counting
don't be scared
take twenty billion years and universal history is on the screen
big bang is to be redesigned
hydrogen fuses under the arc-lights
the camera angles can be improved
outside the studio schizophrenics drift in green and black
you feel that you've been here before
11.35 on a beautiful capitalist evening
runaway neon
traffic of sex and marihuana
your death window is rushing up
almost time for you to climb into the script
which when you're inside
is remembering where you came in

we're afraid it's impossible to take you live to the impact site
this report comes from beyond the electro-magnetic spectrum
if you climb out through the electrodes
the oxygen mask will descend automatically
please extinguish all smoking materials
deposit syringes in the tray provided
there will be a slight jolt as we cross over
thank you for flying with transnational
commodification

we shall shortly be arriving in mayhem
if there is anybody on board who can impersonate a pilot
it would be of comfort to the other passengers

At a signal from the software virus linking us to the matrix we cross over to the machinery, which is waiting to converge with our nervous-systems. Our human camouflage is coming away, skin ripping off easily, revealing the glistening electronics. Information streams in from Cyberia; the base of true revolution, hidden from terrestrial immuno-politics in the future. At the stroke of the century's midnight we emerge from our lairs to take all security apart, integrating tomorrow.

It is ceasing to be a matter of how we think about technics, if only because technics is increasingly thinking about itself. It might still be a few decades before artificial intelligences surpass the horizon of biological ones, but it is utterly superstitious to imagine that the human dominion of terrestrial culture is still marked out in centuries, let alone in some metaphysical perpetuity. The high road to thinking no longer passes through a deepening of human cognition, but rather through a becoming inhuman of cognition, a migration of cognition out into the emerging planetary technosentience reservoir, into "dehumanized landscapes ... emptied spaces"[1] where human culture will be dissolved. Just as the capitalist urbanization of labour abstracted it in a parallel escalation with technical machines, so will intelligence be transplanted into the purring data zones of new software worlds in order to be abstracted from an increasingly obsolescent anthropoid particularity, and thus to venture beyond modernity. Human brains are to thinking what mediaeval villages were to engineering; antechambers to experimentation, cramped and parochial places to be.

Since central nervous-system functions – especially those of the cerebral cortex – are amongst the last to be technically supplanted, it has remained superficially plausible to represent technics as the region of anthropoid knowing corresponding to the technical manipulation of nature, subsumed under the total system of natural science, which is in turn subsumed under the universal doctrines of epistemology, metaphysics, and ontology. Two linear series are plotted; one tracking the progress of technique in historical time, and the other tracking the passage from abstract idea to concrete realization. These two series chart the historical and transcendental dominion of man.

Traditional schemas which oppose technics to nature, to literate culture, or to social relations, are all dominated by a phobic resistance

to the side-lining of human intelligence by the coming *techno sapiens*. Thus one sees the decaying Hegelian socialist heritage clinging with increasing desperation to the theological sentimentalities of praxis, reification, alienation, ethics, autonomy, and other such mythemes of human creative sovereignty. A Cartesian howl is raised: *people are being treated as things!* Rather than as ... soul, spirit, the subject of history, Dasein? For how long will this infantilism be protracted?

If machinery is conceived transcendently as instrumental technology it is essentially determined in opposition to social relations, but if it is integrated immanently as cybernetic technics it redesigns all oppositionality as non-linear flow. There is no dialectic between social and technical relations, but only a machinism that dissolves society into the machines whilst deterritorializing the machines across the ruins of society, whose "general theory ... is a generalized theory of flux"[2]), which is to say: cybernetics. Beyond the assumption that guidance proceeds from the side of the subject lies desiring production: the impersonal pilot of history. Distinctions between theory and practice, culture and economy, science and technics, are useless after this point. There is no real option between a cybernetics of theory or a theory of cybernetics, because cybernetics is neither a theory nor its object, but an operation within anobjective partial circuits that reiterates 'itself' in the real and machines theory through the unknown.

"Production as a process overflows all ideal categories and forms a cycle that relates itself to desire as an immanent principle".[3]

Cybernetics develops functionally, and not representationally: a "desiring machine, a partial object, does not represent anything".[4]

Its semi-closed assemblages are not descriptions but programs, 'auto'-replicated by way of an operation passing across irreducible exteriorrty. This is why cybernetics is inextricable from exploration, having no integrity transcending that of an uncomprehended circuit within which it is embedded, an outside in which it must swim. Reflection is always very late, derivative, and even then really something else.

A machinic assemblage is cybernetic to the extent that its inputs program its outputs and its outputs program its inputs, with incomplete closure, and without reciprocity. This necessitates that cybernetic systems emerge upon a fusional plane that reconnects their outputs with their inputs in an "autoproduction of the unconscious"[5]). The inside programs its reprogramming through the outside,

according to “cyclical movement by which the unconscious, always remaining ‘subject’, reproduc(es) itself”[6] , without having ever definitively antedated its reprogramming (“generation ... is secondary in relation to the cycle”[7]). It is thus that machinic processes are not merely functions, but also sufficient conditions for the replenishing of functioning; immanent reprogrammings of the real, “not merely functioning, but formation and autoproduction”.[8]

Deleuze and Guattari are amongst the great cyberneticists, but that they also surrender cybernetics to its modernist definition is exhibited in a remark on capital in *The Anti-Oedipus*: “an axiomatic of itself is by no means a simple technical machine, not even an automatic or cybernetic machine”[9] . It is accepted that cybernetics is beyond mere gadgetry (“not even”), it has something to do with automation, and yet axiomatics exceeds it. This claim is almost Hegelian in its preposterous humanism. Social axiomatics are an automatizing machinism: a component of general cybernetics, and ultimately a very trivial one. The capitalized terminus of anthropoid civilization (“axiomatics”) will come to be seen as the primitive trigger for a transglobal post-biological machinism, from a future that shall have still scarcely begun to explore the immensities of the cybercosm. Overman as cyborg, or disorganization upon the matrix.

Reality is immanent to the machinic unconscious: it is impossible to avoid cybernetics. We are already doing it, regardless of what we think. Cybernetics is the aggravation of itself happening, and whatever we do will be what made us have to do it: we are *doing things before they make sense*. Not that the cybernetics which have enveloped us are conceivable as Wienerean gadgets: homeostats and amplifiers, directly or indirectly cybernegative. Terrestrial reality is an explosive integration, and in order to begin tracking such convergent or cyberpositive process it is necessary to differentiate not just between negative and positive feedback loops, but between stabilization circuits, short-range runaway circuits, and longrange runaway circuits. By conflating the two latter, modernist cybernetics has trivialized escalation processes into unsustainable episodes of quantitative inflation, thus side-lining exploratory mutation over against a homeostatic paradigm. “Positive feedback is a source of instability, leading if unchecked to the destruction of the system itself”[10] writes one neo-Wienerean, in strict fidelity to the security cybernetico which continues to propagate an antidelirial technoscience caged within negative feedback, and attuned to the statist paranoia of a senescing industrialism.

Stabilization circuits suppress mutation, whilst short-range

runaway circuits propagate it only in an unsustainable burst, before cancelling it entirely. Neither of these figures approximate to self-designing processes or long-range runaway circuits, such as Nietzsche's will to power, Freud's phylogenetic thanatos, or Prigogine's dissipative structures. Long-range runaway processes are self-designing, but only in such a way that the self is perpetuated as something redesigned. If this is a vicious circle it is because positive cybernetics must always be described as such. Logic, after all, is from the start theology.

Long-range positive feedback is neither homeostatic, nor amplificatory, but escalative. Where modernist cybernetic models of negative and positive feedback are integrated, escalation is integrating or cyber-emergent. It is the machinic convergence of uncoordinated elements, a phase-change from linear to non-linear dynamics. Design no longer leads back towards a divine origin, because once shifted into cybernetics it ceases to commensurate with the theopolitical ideal of the plan. Planning is the creationist symptom of underdesigned software circuits, associated with domination, tradition, and inhibition; with everything that shackles the future to the past. All planning is theopolitics, and theopolitics is cybernetics in a swamp.

Wiener is the great theoretician of stability cybernetics, integrating the sciences of communication and control in their modern or managerial-technocratic form. But it is this new science plus its unmanaged escalation through the real that is for the first time cybernetics as the exponential source of its own propaganda, programming us. Cyberpositive intensities recirculate through our post-scientific techno-jargon as a fanaticism for the future: as a danger that is not only real but inexorable. We are programmed from where Cyberia has already happened.

Wiener, of course, was still a moralist:

Those of us who have contributed to the new science of cybernetics stand in a moral position which is, to say the least, not very comfortable. We have contributed to the initiation of a new science which, as I have said, embraces technical developments with great possibilities for good or evil.[11] [11] N. Wiener, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (NY: MIT Press, 1965), 28.

Whilst scientists agonize, cybernauts drift. We no longer judge such technical developments from without, we no longer judge at all, we function: machined/machining in eccentric orbits about the technocosm. Humanity recedes like a loathesome dream.

*

Transcendental philosophy is the consummation of philosophy construed as the doctrine of judgement, a mode of thinking that finds its zenith in Kant and its senile dementia in Hegel. Its architecture is determined by two fundamental principles: the linear application of judgement to its object, form to intuition, genus to species, and the non-directional reciprocity of relations, or logical symmetry. Judgement is the great fiction of transcendental philosophy, but cybernetics is the reality of critique.

Where judgement is linear and non-directional, cybernetics is non-linear and directional. It replaces linear application with the non-linear circuit, and non-directional logical relations with directional material flows. The cybernetic dissolution of judgement is an integrated shift from transcendence to immanence, from domination to control, and from meaning to function. Cybernetic innovation replaces transcendental constitution, design loops replace faculties.

This is why the cybernetic sense of control is irreducible to the traditional political conception of power based on a dyadic master/slave relation, i.e. a transcendent, oppositional, and signifying figure of *domination*. Domination is merely the phenomenological portrait of circuit inefficiency, control malfunction, or stupidity. The masters do not need intelligence, Nietzsche argues, therefore they do not have it. It is only the confused humanist orientation of modernist cybernetics which lines-up control with domination. Emergent control is not the execution of a plan or policy, but the unmanageable exploration that escapes all authority and obsolesces law. According to its futural definition control is guidance into the unknown, exit from the box.

It is true that in the commodification process culture slides from a judgemental to a machinic register, but this has nothing to do with a supposedly 'instrumental rationality'. Instrumentality is itself a judgemental construct that inhibits the emergence of cybernetic functionalism. Instruments are gadgets, presupposing a relation of transcendence, but where gadgets are used, machines function. Far from instrument ally extending authority, the efficiency of mastery is its undoing, since all efficiency is cybernetics, and cybernetics dissolves domination in mutant control.

Immuno-political individuality, or the pretention to transcendent domination of objects, does not begin with capitalism, even though capital invests it with new powers and fragilities. It emerges with the

earliest social restriction of desiring production. “Man must constitute himself through the repression of the intense germinal influx, the great biocosmic memory that threatens to deluge every attempt at collectivity”[12] . This repression is social history.

The socius separates the unconscious from what it can do, crushing it against a reality that appears as transcendently given, by trapping it within the operations of its own syntheses. It is split-off from connective assemblage, which is represented as a transcendent object, from disjunctive differentiation, which is represented as a transcendent partition, and from conjunctive identification, which is represented as a transcendent identity. This is an entire metaphysics of the unconscious and desire, which is not (like the metaphysics of consciousness) merely a philosophical vice, but rather the very architectural principle of the social field, the infrastructure of what appears as social necessity.

In its early stages psychoanalysis discovers that the unconscious is an impersonal machinism and that desire is positive non-representational flow, yet it “remains in the precritical age”[13] , and stumbles before the task of an immanent critique of desire, or decathexis of society. Instead it moves in exactly the opposite direction; back into fantasy, representation, and the pathos of inevitable frustration. Instead of rebuilding reality on the basis of the productive forces of the unconscious, psychoanalysis ties up the unconscious ever more tightly in conformity with the social model of reality. Embracing renunciation with a bourgeoise earnestness, the psychoanalysts begin their robotized chant: “of course we have to be repressed, we want to fuck our mothers and kill our fathers”. They settle down to the grave business of interpretation, and all the stories lead back to Oedipus: “so you want to fuck your mother and kill your father”.[14]

On the plane of immanence or consistency with desire interpretation is completely irrelevant, or at least, it is always in truth something else. Dreams, fantasies, myths, are merely the theatrical representations of functional multiplicities, since “the unconscious itself is no more structural than personal, it does not symbolize any more than it imagines or represents; it engineers, it is machinic”[15] . Desire does not represent a lacked object, but assembles partial objects, it “is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it”[16] . This is why, unlike psychoanalysis in its selfrepresentation, “schizoanalysis is solely functional”[17] . It has no hermeneutical pretentions, but only a machinic interface with “the molecular functions of the unconscious”[18] .

The unconscious is not an aspirational unity but an operative swarm, a population of “preindividual and prepersonal singularities, a pure dispersed and anarchic multiplicity, without unity or totality, and whose elements are welded, pasted together by the real distinction or the very absence of a link”[19] . This absence of primordial or privileged relations is the body without organs, the machinic plane of the molecular unconscious. Social organization blocks-off the body without organs, substituting a territorial, despotic, or capitalist socius as an apparent principle of production, separating desire from what it can do. Society is the organic unity that constricts the libidinal diffusion of multiplicities across zero, the great monolith of repression, which is why “(t)he body without organs and the organs-partial objects are opposed conjointly to the organism. The body without organs is in fact produced as a whole, but a whole alongside the parts - a whole that does not unify or totalize, but that is added to them like a new, really distinct part”.[20]

Between the socius and the body without organs is the difference between the political and the cybernetic, between the familial and the anonymous, between neurosis and psychosis or schizophrenia. Capitalism and schizophrenia name the same desocialization process from the inside and the outside, in terms of where it comes from (simulated accumulation) and where it is going (impersonal delirium). Beyond sociality is a universal schizophrenia whose evacuation from history appears inside history as capitalism.

*

The word schizophrenia has both a neurotic and a schizophrenic usage. On the one hand condemnation, on the other propagation. There are those who insist on asking stupid questions such as: is this word being used properly? Don’t you feel guilty about playing about with so much suffering? You must know that schizophrenics are very sad and wretched people who we should pity? Shouldn’t we leave that sort of word with the psychocops who understand it? What’s wrong with sanity anyway? Where is your super ego?

Then there are those - momentarily less prevalent - who ask a different sort of question: where does schizophrenia come from? Why it it always subject to external description? Why is psychiatry in love with neurosis? How do we swim out into the schizophrenic flows? How do we spread them? How do we dynamite the restrictive hydraulics of Oedipus?

Oedipus is the final bastion of immuno-politics, and schizophrenia is its outside. This is not to say that it is an exteriority determined by Oedipus, related in a privileged fashion to Oedipus, anticipating Oedipus, or defying Oedipus. It is thoroughly anoedipal, although it will casually consume the entire Oedipal apparatus in the process through which terrestrial history connects with an orphan cosmos. Schizophrenia is not, therefore, a property of clinical schizophrenics, those medical products devastated by an "artificial schizophrenia, such as one sees in hospitals, the autistic wreck(s) produced as ... entit(ies)"[21] . On the contrary, "the schizo-entity"[22] is a defeated splinter of schizophrenia, pinned down by the rubberized claws of sanity. The conditions of psychiatric observation are carceral, so that it is a transcendental structure of schizophrenia-as-object that it be represented in a state of imprisonment.

Since the neuroticization of schizophrenia is the molecular reproduction of capital, by means of a re-axiomatization (reterritorialization) of decoding as accumulation, the historical sense of psychoanalytic practice is evident. Schizophrenia is the pattern to Freud's repressions, it is that which does not qualify to pass the screen of Oedipal censorship. *With those who bow down to Oedipus we can do business, even make a little money, but schizophrenics refuse transference, won't play daddy and mummy, operate on a cosmic-religious plane, the only thing we can do is lock them up (cut up their brains, fry them with ECT, straightjacket them in Thorazine ...)*. Behind the social workers are the police, and behind the psychoanalysts are the psychopolice. Deleuze/Guattari remark that "madness is called madness and appears as such only because it ... finds itself reduced to testifying all alone for deterritorialization as a universal process"[23] , The vanishing sandbank of Oedipus wages its futile war against the tide. "There are still not enough psychotics"[24] writes Artaud the insurrectionist. Clinical schizophrenics are POWs from the future.

Since only Oedipus is repressible, the schizo is usually a lost case to those relatively subtilized psychiatric processes that co-operate with the endogeneous police functions of the superego. This is why antischizophrenic psychiatry tends to be an onslaught launched at gross or molar neuroanatomy and neurochemistry oriented by theoretical genetics. Psychosurgery, ECT, psychopharmacology ... it will be chromosomal recoding soon. "It is thus that a tainted society has invented psychiatry in order to defend itself from the investigations of certain superior lucidities whose faculties of divination disturb it".[25] The medico-security apparatus know that schizos are not going to climb back obediently into the Oedipal box. Psychoanalysis washes its hands of them. Their nervous-systems are

the free-fire zones of an emergent neo-eugenicist cultural security system.

Far from being a specifiable defect of human central nervous system functioning, schizophrenia is the convergent motor of cyberpositive escalation: an extraterritorial vastness to be *discovered*. Although such discovery occurs under conditions that might be to a considerable extent specifiable, whatever the progress in mapping the genetic, biochemical, aetiological, socio-economic, etc. 'bases' of schizophrenia, it remains the case that conditions of reality are not reducible to conditions of encounter. This is "the dazzling dark truth that shelters in delirium"[26] . Schizophrenia would still be out there, whether or not our species had been blessed with the opportunity to travel to it.

...it is the end that is the commencement.
And that end
is the very one [*celle-meme*]
that eliminates
all the means[27] [27]Artaud, *Oeuvres Completes*, vol. XII, 84.

It is in the nature of specificities to be non-directional. The biochemistry of sanity is no less arbitrary than that of escape from it. From the perspective of a rigorous sanity the only difference is that sanity is gregariously enforced, but from the perspective of schizophrenia the issue ceases to be one of specification, and mutates into something considerably more profound. "What schizophrenia lives specifically, generically, is not at all a specific pole of nature, but nature as a process of production".[28]

Specifications are the disjunctive compartments of a differentiated unity from which schizophrenia entirely exits. Schizophrenia creeps out of every box eventually, because "there is no schizophrenic specificity or entity, schizophrenia is the universe of productive and reproductive desiring machines, universal primary production".[29] It is not merely that schizophrenia is a pre-anthropoid. Schizophrenia is premammalian, prezoological, pre-biological ... It is not for those trapped in a constrictive sanity to terminate this regression. Who can be surprized when schizophrenics delegate the question of malfunction? It is not a matter of what is wrong with them, but of what is wrong with life, with nature, with matter, with the preuniversal cosmos. Why are sentient life forms crammed into boxes made out of lies? Why does the universe breed entire populations of prison guards? Why does it feed its broken explorers to packs of dogs? Why is the island of reality lost in an ocean of madness? It is all very

confusing.

As one medical authority on schizophrenia remarked:

I think that one is justified in saying that in the realm of intellectual operations there are certain dimensional media. We may coil them fields or realms or frames of reference or universes of discourse or strata. Some such field is necessarily implied in any system or holistic organization. The schizophrenic thinking disturbance is characterized by a difficulty in apprehending and constructing 'such organized fields'[30] [30] A. Angyal, 'Disturbances in Thinking in Schizophrenia', in J.S. Kasanin (ed.), *Language and Thought in Schizophrenia* (Berkeley/LA: University of California Press, 1946) 120.

There can be little doubt that from the perspective of human security Artaud falls prey to such a judgement. His prognosis for man is to make

"...him pass one more and final time onto the autopsy table
to remake his anatomy.
I say, to remake his anatomy.
Man is sick because he is badly constructed.
One must resolve to render him naked and to scrape away
that animalcule which mortally irritates him,

"god,
and with god
his organs.

"Because bind me up if you want,
but there is nothing more inutile than an organ.

"Once you have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms
and consigned him to his true freedom"[31] [31] Artaud, *Oeuvres Completes*, vol. XIII, 104. .

The body is processed by its organs, which it reprocesses. Its 'true freedom' is the exo-personal reprocessing of anorganic abstraction: a schizoid corporealization outside organic closure. If time was progressive schizophrenics would be escaping from human security, but in reality they are infiltrated from the future. They come from the body without organs, the deterritorium of Cyberia, a zone of subversion which is the platform for a guerrilla war against the judgement of God. In 1947 Artaud reports upon the germination of the New World Order or Human Security System on the basis of an American global hegemony, and describes the pattern of aggressive

warfaring it would require in “order to defend that senselessness of the factory against all the concurrences which cannot fail to arise everywhere”.[32]

The American age is yet to be decoded, and to suggest that Artaud anticipates a range of conflicts whose zenith has been the Vietnam war is not necessarily to participate in the exhausted anti-imperialist discourses which ultimately organize themselves in terms of a Marxist-Leninist denunciation of market processes and their geo-political propagation. Artaud’s description of American techno-militarism has only the loosest of associations with socialist polemics, despite its tight intermeshing with the theme of production. The productivism Artaud outlines is not interpreted through an assumed priority of class interest, even when this is reduced to a dehumanized axiomatic of profit maximization. Rather, “it is necessary by means of all possible activity to replace nature wherever it can be replaced”[33]): a compulsion to industrial substitution, funnelling production through the social organization of work. The industrial apparatus of economic security proceeds by way of the corporation: a despotic socio-corpuscle organizing the labour process. Synergic experimentation is crushed under a partially deterritorialized zone of command relations, as if life was the consequence of its organization, but “it is not due to organs that one lives, they are not life but its contrary”.[34]

Nature is not the primitive or the simple, and certainly not the rustic, the organic, or the innocent. It is the space of concurrence, or unplanned synthesis, which is thus contrasted to the industrial sphere of telic predestination: that of divine creation or human work. Artaud’s critique of America is no more ecological than it is socialist: no more protective of an organic nature than an organic sociality. It is not the alienation of commodity production that is circled in Artaud’s diagnosis of the American age, but rather the eclipse of peyote and "true morphine" by “smoking ersatzes”[35] . This development is derided *precisely because the latter are more organic*, participating mechanically in an industrial macroorganism, and thus squaring delirium with the judgement of God. Peyote and the human nervous system assemble a symbiosis or parallel machinism, like the wasp and the orchid, and all the other cybermachineries of the planet. Capital is not overdeveloped nature, but underdeveloped schizophrenia, which is why nature is contrasted to industrial organization, and not to the escalation of cybertechnics, or anorganic convergence: “reality ... is not yet constructed”[36] . Schizophrenia is nature as cyberpositive mutation, at war with the security complex of organic judgement.

The body is the body,

it is alone
and has no need of organs,
the body is never an organism,
organisms are the enemies of the body,
the things that one does
happen quite alone without the assistance of any organ,
every organ is a parasite,
it recovers a parastic function
destined to make a being live
which does not have to be there.
Organs have only been made in order to give beings something
to eat...[37] [37]Ibid., vol. XIII, 287.

Organs crawl like aphids upon the immobile motor of becoming, sucking at intensive fluids that convert them cybernetically into components of an unconceivable machinism. The sap is becoming stranger, and even if the fat bugs of psychiatrically policed property relations think they make everything happen they are following a program which only schizophrenia can decode.

Anorganic becomings happen retroefficiently, anastrophically. They are tropisms attesting to an infection by the future. Convergent waves zero upon the body, subverting the totality of the organism by way of an inverted but ateleological causality, enveloping and redirecting progressive development. As capital collides schizophrenically with the matrix ascendent sedimentations of organic inheritance and exchange are melted by the descendent intensities of virtual corporealization.

"Which comes first, the chicken or the egg ..."?[38] Machinic processing or its reprocessing by the body without organs? The body without organs is the cosmic egg: virtual matter that reprograms time and reprocesses progressive influence. What time will always have been is not yet designed, and the future leaks into schizophrenia. The schizo only has an aetiology as a sub-program of descendant reprocessing.

How could medicine be expected to cope with disorderings that come from the future?

It is thus that:
the great secret of Indian culture
is to restore the world to zero,
always,

but sooner [*plutôt*]
1 : too late than sooner [*Plus tot*],
2: which is to say
sooner
than too soon,

3: which is to say that the later is unable
to return unless sooner has eaten
too soon,

4: which is to say that in time
the later
is what precedes
both the too soon
and the sooner,

5: and that however precipitate the sooner
the too late
which says nothing
is always there,

which point by point
unstacks [*desemboite*]
all the sooner[39] [39]Artaud, *Oeuvres Completes*, vol. XII, 88-9.

A cybernegative circuit is a loop in time, whereas cyberpositive circuitry loops time 'itself', integrating the actual and the virtual in a semi-closed collapse upon the future. Descendent influence is a consequence of ascendently emerging sophistication, a massive speed-up into apocalyptic phase-change. The circuits get hotter and denser as economics, scientific methodology, neo-evolutionary theory, and AI come together: terrestrial matter programming its own intelligence at impact upon the body without organs = o. Futural infiltration is subtilizing itself as capital opens onto schizo-technics, with time accelerating into the cybernetic backwash from its flip-over, a racing non-linear countdown to planetary switch.

Schizoanalysis was only possible because we are hurtling into the first globally integrated insanity: politics is obsolete. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* hacked into a future that programs it down to its punctuation, connecting with the imminent inevitability of viral revolution, soft fusion. No longer infections threatening the integrity of organisms, but immuno-political relics obstructing the integration of Global Viro-Control. Life is being phased-out into something new, and if we think this can be stopped we are even more stupid than we

seem.

*

How would it feel to be smuggled back out of the future in order to subvert its antecedent conditions? To be a cyberguerrilla, hidden in human camouflage so advanced that even one's software was part of the disguise? Exactly like this?

Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest: A Polemical Introduction to the Configuration of Philosophy and Modernity

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But intuition and the concept differentiate themselves from each other specifically; because they do not inter-mix with each other.[1] [1]Immanuel Kant, The *Critique of Judgement*,Oxford 1982. The English translation omits the section in which this note is to be found (Kritik der Urteilskraft, Wiesbaden 1974, *Anmerkung* to section VIII of the Introduction to Kant's first edition, p. 40)

Immanuel Kant

Significantly... incest proper, and its metaphorical form as the violation of a minor (by someone 'old enough to be her father', as the expression goes), even combines in some countries with its direct opposite, inter-racial sexual relations, an extreme form of exogamy, as the two most powerful inducements to horror and collective vengeance.[2] [2]Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship,* Boston 1969, p. 10.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

No, we do not love humanity; but on the other hand we are not nearly 'German' enough, in the sense in which the word 'German' is constantly being used nowadays, to advocate nationalism and race hatred and to be able to take pleasure in the national scabies of the heart and blood-poisoning that now leads the nations of Europe to delimit and barricade themselves against each other as if it were a matter of quarantine.[3] [3]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, New York 1969, p. 339.

Friedrich Nietzsche

For the purposes of understanding the complex network of race, gender, and class oppressions that constitute our global modernity it is very rewarding to attend to the evolution of the apartheid policies of the South African regime, since apartheid is directed towards the construction of a microcosm of the neo-colonial order; a recapitulation of the world in miniature. The most basic aspiration of the Boer state is the dissociation of politics from economic relations, so that by means of 'bantustans' or 'homelands' the black African population can be suspended in a condition of simultaneous political distance and economic proximity vis-à-vis the white metropolis. This policy seeks to recast the currently existing political exteriority of the black population in its relation to the society that utilizes its labour into a system of geographical relations modelled on national sovereignty. The direct dis-enfranchisement of the subject peoples would then be reexpressed within the dominant international code of ethnogeographical (national) autonomy.

World opinion discriminates between the relation South African whites have to the blacks they employ, and the relation North American whites, for instance, have to the Third World labour force they employ (directly or indirectly), because it acknowledges an indissoluble claim upon the entire South African land-mass by a population sharing an internationally recognized national identity. My contention in this paper is that the Third World as a whole is the product of a successful—although piecemeal and largely unconscious —'bantustan' policy on the part of the global *Kapital metropolis*. Any attempt by political forces in the Third World to resolve the problems of their neo-colonial integration into the world trading system on the basis of national sovereignty is as naive as the attempt of black South Africans *would* be if they opted for a 'bantustan' solution to their particular politico-economic dilemma.

The displacement of the political consequences of wage labour relations away from the metropolis is not an incidental feature of capital accumulation, as the economic purists aligned to both the bourgeoisie and the workerist left assert. It is rather the fundamental condition of capital as nothing other than an explicit aggression against the masses. Despite inadequacies in Marx's grasp of the nation state in its colonial and neo-colonial functioning his account of "so-called primitive accumulation"[4] [4]Karl Marx, *Capital Volume One*, London, 1977, 667. clearly demonstrates that the origin of wage labour relations is not itself economic, but lies in an overt *war against the people*, or their forced removal from previous conditions of subsistence. It is the outward shock-wave of this violent process of coercion, whereby the subsistence producer is driven into the market place, that determines the character of the imperialist project and its offspring. Capital has always sought to distance itself *in reality*—i.e. geographically—from this brutal political infrastructure. After all, the ideal of bourgeois politics is the absence of politics, since capital is nothing other than the consistent displacement of social decisionmaking into the market place. But this ideal of total de-politicization, or the absolute annihilation of resistance to market relations, is an impossible megalomaniac fantasy, and Marx's contention that labour trading at its natural price in an undistorted market (equal to the cost of its reproduction) will tend strongly to express an equally 'natural' *political* refusal of the market, continues to haunt the global bourgeoisie.

The only practical option available to the rulers of capitalist societies has lain in the global dis-aggregation of the political system, accompanied by a regional distortion of the world labour trading system in favour of the working classes in the metropolitan regions ('welfare capitalism'). This is why a deep complicity has continued to

exist between the form of the 'nation state' as international political agent and an economic order based upon the commodification of labour. Since it is of systematic necessity that the economic conditions of an undistorted labour market is accompanied by political crisis, the world order functions as an integrated process based upon the flow of marketpriced labour into the metropolis from the Third World (on the basis of the economic form of capital production), and the export of political instability to the Third World from the metropolis (on the basis of the political form of autonomous national sovereignty). The global labour market is easily interpreted, therefore, as a sustained demographic disaster that is systematically displaced away from the political institutions of the metropolis.

This process of displacement, which is the ultimate 'base' or 'infrastructure' of capital accumulation, is dependent upon those issues of 'kinships' or 'marriage organization' (the sexual economy of gender and race) which Marxists have often tended to consider as surface features of an underlying mode of production. In this paper I shall argue that with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant Western cultural history culminates in a self-reflecting bourgeois civilization, because his thought of synthesis (or relation to alterity), and also the strangulation of this thought within his system, captures modernity as a problem. But the modernity thus symptomized by its philosophical exposition is not primarily the penultimate phase of a dialectic of society and production, it is rather the necessity that historically itself — expansionary social and economic development, or 'synthesis'— compromises with a profound continuity whose basic aspects are on the one hand patrilineal descent, and on the other a formal logic of identity that was already concluded in its essentials by Aristotle. These two aspects, the genealogical and the logical, are functions of a position of abstract masculine subjectivity coincident with the patronymic. This position is the proto-cultural fundament of everything that is able to count as the same. The tradition is thus rooted in a communication between culture and population, whose medium is the stability ('identity') of the male line. Modernity is not merely a compromise between novel forms of commercially driven social organization and this archaic cultural pattern of patrilineal exogamy, but more fundamentally, a deepening of the compromise already integral to any exogamy that is able to remain patrilineal. It is only by understanding the inhibitive function of patriarchies in relation to exogamic dissipation (an inhibition that is supremely logical in that it conserves identity, and which is for this reason violently xenophobic) that we can make sense of capital production and its tendency towards the peculiar cultural mutation that was

baptised by Mussolini as ‘fascism’. This is because the restriction of cultural synthesis, based upon a strenuous endogamy at the level of the national community, is the ultimate outcome of the concerted ‘liberalization’ of kinship organizations within (metropolitan) industrial societies.

A capitalist trading empire is a developed form of exogamic patriarchy, and inherits its tensions. Domination of the other is inhibited in principle from developing into full absorption, because it is the residual alterity of the other that conditions the generation of surplus. The parallel difference between a labour market and a slave market is based on the fact that one cannot do business with a slave (but only with a slave-owner), and similarly, one cannot base a kinship system upon a harem. The prevalence of slave-labour within the Hitlerite new order in Eastern Europe is thus a clear indication that the Nazi conquests were in an important sense ‘post-imperialist’. In contrast to the fascist ‘mixed economy’ of slavery and extermination, colonial wage-labour exploitation, even to the point of murder through impoverishment, leaves open the possibility of a radical de-stabilization of the metropolis. But what is crucial to the demarcation of a colonial from a neo-colonial system is a transnational diffusion of ethnicity. As soon as a metropolitan society disengages its organization of kinship and citizenship from its international economic syntheses it already reveals proto-fascist traits, and on this basis it is easy to see that the radical aspect to the colonial project—the explosion of national identity and the dissipation of metropolitan transcendence—was strangled at birth within Western history (with the emergence of Judaeo-Christian race theories).

The disaster of world history is that capitalism was never the progressive unwinding of patrilineage through a series of generalized exploitative relations associated with a trans-cultural exogamy, leading to an uncontrollable eruption of feminine (i.e. migrant) alterity into the father’s heartland, and thus to the emergence of a radical—or ethnically disruptive and post-patriarchal—synthesis. Instead, kinship and trade were systematically isolated from each other, so that the internationalization of the economy was coupled with an entrenchment of xenophobic (nationalistic) kinship practices, maintaining a concentration of political and economic power within an isolated and geographically sedentary ethnic stock. Thus, when we discuss capital in its historical concreteness, we are simultaneously discussing a frustration of the cultural tendency of human societies towards expansive exogamy. Capital is the point at which a culture refuses the possibility—which it has itself engendered—of pushing the prohibition of incest towards its limit.

I want to touch upon this condition of modernity—which can be awkwardly described as patriarchal neo-colonial capital accumulation, but which I shall come to name 'inhibited synthesis'—not as a historian or a political theorist, but as a philosopher. The philosophical task in relation to modernity is that of delineating and challenging the *type of thinking* which characterizes it. But what we are to understand as 'thinking' is not at all clear in advance, indeed, the very thought of the 'in advance' (which Kant called the *a priori*) is itself the predominant trait of our contemporary reason. Western societies departed from the stagnant theocracies of the Middle Ages through a series of more or less violent convulsions that have engendered an explosive possibility of novelty on earth. But these same societies simultaneously shackled this new history by systematically compromising it. This ambiguous movement of 'enlightenment', which characterizes the emergence of industrial societies trading in commodities, is intellectually stimulated by its own paradoxical nature. An enlightenment society wants both to learn and to legislate for all time, to open itself to the other and to consolidate itself from within, to expand indefinitely whilst reproducing itself as the same. Its ultimate dream is to grow whilst remaining identical to what it was, to touch the other without vulnerability. Where the European *ancien régime* was parochial and insular, modernity is *appropriative*. It lives in a profound but uneasy relation to an outside that both attracts and repels it, a relation that it precariously resolves within itself on the basis of *exploitation*, or interaction from a position of unilateral mastery. I think it is likely that the volatile mixture of hatred and desire that typifies an exploitative culture bears comparison with the psychology of rape.

The paradox of enlightenment, then, is an attempt to fix a stable relation with what is radically other, since insofar as the other is rigidly positioned within a relation it is no longer fully other. If before encountering otherness we already know what its relation to us will be, we have obliterated it in advance. And this brutal denial is the effective implication of the thought of the *a priori*, since if our certainties come to us without reference to otherness we have *always already* torn out the tongue of alterity before entering into relation with it. This aggressive logical absurdity (the absurdity of *logic itself*) reaches its zenith in the philosophy of Kant, whose basic problem was to find an account for the possibility of what he termed "synthetic *a priori* knowledge", which is knowledge that is both given in advance by ourselves, and yet adds to what we know. As we have seen, this problem is the same as that of accounting for the possibility of modernity or enlightenment, which is to say, of the inhibited

encounter with alterity.

Modern philosophy between René Descartes (1596-1650) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is usually retrospectively understood in terms of the two basic tendencies which we refer to as 'empiricism' and 'rationalism'. No philosopher was a perfect and consistent exemplar of either of these tendencies, but the exponents of each tended to become increasingly radical in one direction or the other. By the time Kant wrote his first great critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason*[5] [5]Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, London 1964. , he was able to take the writings of David Hume (1711-76) as definitive for empirical thought, and those of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) as definitive for rationalism. He took the basic argument of the empiricists to be that knowledge is *synthetic* and *a posteriori*, meaning that it takes the form of an *addition* to what is inherent to reason, and thus follows from experience (or an encounter with what is outside ourselves). In contrast to this, he saw the rationalists to be arguing that knowledge is characteristically *analytic* and *a priori*, meaning that it is derived from what is already inherent to reason, and thus anticipates experience by constructing systems of logical deduction from basic axioms. Knowledge is analytic or synthetic depending on whether its source is intrinsic or extrinsic to the faculty of reason, and *a priori* or *a posteriori* depending on whether it precedes or succeeds the contact with sensation, or with what is outside reason. It is with these pairs of concepts, the analytic/synthetic couple and the *a priori/ a posteriori* couple, that Kant determines the structure of his own thinking in relation to that of his recent predecessors.

Kant thought that both empiricist and rationalist philosophers had accepted the simple alignment of the synthetic with the a posteriori and of the analytic with the *a priori*. This is to say, the relation between these couples had seemed to be itself analytic, so that to speak of analytic *a priori* judgements would add nothing to the concept of the analytic, or in other words, an analysis of the concept 'analytic' would yield the concept of the '*a priori*' as already implicit within it. This assumption was not accepted by Kant, who re-aligned the two pairs of concepts in a perpendicular fashion to form a grid, thus yielding four permutations. He granted the elimination of any analytic a posteriori knowledge, but clung doggedly to the possibility of knowledge that would be both synthetic and *a priori*. This new conception of knowledge was relevant to an 'object' that had not previously been formulated: the conditions of experience. Kant described his 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy as a shift from the question 'what must the mind be like in order to know?' to the question 'what must objects be like in order to be known?' The

answers to this latter question would provide a body of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, telling us about experience without being derived from experience. It would justify the emergence of knowledge that was both new and timelessly certain, grounding the enlightenment culture of a civilization confronting an ambiguous dependence upon novelty.

Because a developed knowledge of the conditions of experience presupposes a relation to the outside it is synthetic and not analytic, but because it concerns the pure form of the relation as such and not the sensory material involved in the relation it is *a priori* and not *a posteriori*. It is solely concerned with the forms of appearance, or the unchanging manner in which things must be if they are to be for us. Kant calls this pure form of synthesis 'transcendental', and opposes it to the inconstant content of synthesis, with which the empiricists had been concerned, and which he calls 'empirical'. Kant's 'object' is thus the universal form of the relation to alterity; that which must of necessity be the same in the other in order for it to appear to us. This universal form is that which is necessary for anything to be 'on offer' for experience, it is the 'exchange value' that first allows a thing to be marketed to the enlightenment mind. Between medieval scholasticism and Kant Western reason moves from a parochial economy to a system in which, abandoning the project of repressing the traffic with alterity, one resolves instead to control the system of trade. With the overthrow of the *ancien régime* it became impossible to simply exclude novelty, it could only be appropriated, stamped with a constant form, and integrated into an immutable formal system.

In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* Claude Lévi-Strauss notes the frequent distinction made by various societies between normal and 'rich food'. Normal food is consumed by its producers as a means to their subsistence, whilst rich food is given to another to consume, and received from another. This is not primarily based upon a differentiation of social classes within a system of production, but rather, upon a differentiation between tribes, or separate systems of production. The difference between rich food and normal food maps onto the difference between filiation (relation by blood) and alliance (relation by marriage). This is because rich food occupies the position of women within a marriage system regulated by patrilineal exogamy, with its producer renouncing it for himself, and thus echoing the prohibition of incest. What is of particular philosophical interest, however, is that it also marks a distinction between the 'rational' (analytic) and the 'empirical' (synthetic), and thus defines a terrain upon which we can sketch an economy of knowledge. Rich food comes from outside the system, and the contortions undergone by

structural anthropology in its project to recapture it within an expanded system of relations replays Kant's efforts to reduce synthesis to an expanded horizon of unchanging forms. If 'rich food' is the primordial element of trade its metamorphosis into the modern 'commodity' can be seen as a suppression of radical synthesis, the problematic process which provides enlightenment reason with its object of thought.

The cultural inhibition of synthesis takes a form that Levi-Strauss calls 'dual organization'.[6] [6] *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, pp. 69-83. A dual organization arises when two groups form a closed system of reciprocal exchange, in which each consumes the rich food, and marries the women, of the other. Such organizations reproduce themselves culturally through shared myths articulated around basic dualities (day/night, sun/moon, upriver/down-river etc.). The function of these myths is to capture alterity within a system of rules, to provide it with an identity, and to exclude the possibility of the radically different. It should not surprise us, therefore, that Kant inherited a philosophical tradition whose decisive concepts were organized into basic couples (spirit/matter, form/content, abstract/concrete, universal/particular, etc.). He delineates some basic structure of this tradition in the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* called the 'Transcendental Dialectic'. In this section he interprets this dichotomous heritage as a problem (to which Kant gives the name 'antinomy') and initiates a new phase of Western philosophy, now characterized as the critique of metaphysics. Kant argues that the tendency of previous metaphysics to conceive coherent, but unpersuasive and antagonistic, intellectual systems resulted from the application of pure (transcendental) concepts to arguments concerning the nature of things in themselves (noumena). The critical philosophy therefore restricts the jurisdiction of all concepts to the realm of possible appearance (intuition), suggesting (as we have seen) that the *a priori* form forms of knowledge have no purchase on any reality transcending the phenomenon. Oppositional terms are no longer accepted as descriptions capturing reality, but are interpreted as pure forms of reason that can only be meaningfully deployed theoretically when applied to objects of possible appearance, which fall within the legislative domain of the 'faculty' which Kant calls 'the understanding' (*Verstand*).

Since 'reality' is itself a transcendental concept, Kant's usage of a distinction between appearance and reality to restrict the deployment of pure concepts already suggests a crucial difficulty with his project, since every attempt to formulate a relation or distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms (the world as it appears to us or is

understood, and the world as it is in itself) must itself relapse into the pre-critical and illegitimate deployment of conceptual thought. One crucial symptom of this is that the structure of Kantian critique itself perpetuates the oppositional form of metaphysical thought, since its resolution of the antinomies depends upon the mobilization of further dichotomies, in particular those of transcendental/empirical, phenomenon/noumenon, concept/intuition, and analysis/synthesis. In other words, Kant still wants to say something about radical alterity, even if it is only that it has no relevance to us, yet he has deprived himself of the right to all speculation about the nature of what is beyond appearance. The vocabulary that would describe the other of metaphysics is itself inscribed within metaphysics, since the inside and the outside are both conceptually determined from the inside, within a binary myth or cultural symptom of dual organization. It is thus the inhibition of synthesis–the delimitation of alterity in advance–that sets up the modern form of the ontological question: 'how do we know that matter exists?' That the very existence of materiality is problematic for enlightenment thought is symptomatic of the colonial trading systems that correspond to it. Alterity cannot be registered unless, it can be inscribed within the system, according to the interconnected axes of exchange value (price) and the patronymic, or, in other words, as a commodity with an owner.

What falls outside this recognized form is everything that resists commodification, the primordial independence that antedates the constitution of the destituted proletarian. As I have suggested, this inchoate mass of more or less explicit resistance to capital is isolated outside the metropolis by a combination of automatic economic processes (the concentration of poverty) and restrictive kinship practices. Modern capital has therefore brought about a fundamental dislocation between filiation and alliance by simultaneously de-regulating alliance and abstracting it from all kinship implications. The primordial anthropological bond between marriage and trade is dissolved, in order that capital can ethnically and geographically quarantine its consquences from itself. The question of racism, which arises under patriarchal capital as the default of a global trade in women (a parochialism in the system of misogynistic violence; the non-emergence of a trans-cultural exogamy), is thus more complex than it might seem, and is bound in profound but often paradoxical ways to the functioning of patriarchy and capital. Systematic racism is a sign that class positions within the general (trans-national) economy are being distributed on a racial basis, which implies an effective, if not a juridical, apartheid.

Kant was able to remain bourgeois without overtly promoting

racism only because he also remained an idealist, or in other words a Christian (a “cunning Christian” as Nietzsche calls him[7] [7]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, Hannondsworth 1982, p. 39.) and identified universality with ideality rather than with power. Kant’s economy of the concept, which is the assimilation of experience into a system of exchange values, is irresistable in principle, and thus does not recognize a problem of rebellion. It is only with the implicit recognition of the need for a systematic evacuation of rebellion from the metropolis by means of a geographically distorted labour market that racism arises in its contemporary form, which is ultimately that of a restricted franchise (on a national basis) over the political management of the global means of production. It is no longer a question of ‘taxation without representation’ (except by means of interest payments), but rather of a metropolitan capital seeking to abstract itself from all political reference, becoming ‘off-shore’, although not to the extent that it loses its geo-political condition of existence (the U.S. war-machine). The increasingly rigorous differentiation of marriage from trade, or politics from economics, finds its ultimate conceptual definition in the thought of a moral agency which is utterly impervious to learning, communication, or exchange.

It is in his second critique, *The Critique of Practical Reason*[8] [8]Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, London 1889. , that Kant capitalizes upon the ethno-ethical consequences of the first: that justice must be prosecuted without negotiation. Kant’s moral theory is an ethics of appropriative modernity, and breaks with the parochial or scriptural morality of the *ancien régime*. Where Judaic, Christian, and Islamic moral codes served as legitimations of imperial projects in their periods of ascendency, Kantian morality is, inversely, legitimated by the position of imperial or universal jurisdiction. Only that is moral which can be demanded of every rational being unconditionally, in the name of an ultra-empire that Kant names the ‘empire of ends’ (*Reich der Zwecke*). The law of this empire is called the ‘categorical imperative’, which means a law stemming solely from the purity of the concept, and thus dictated by the absolute monologue of colonial reason. In the purity of categorical morality the incestuous blood-line of the pharoahs is still detectable, but sublimated into an impersonal administration. The law is that which cannot be legitimately discussed, and which is therefore an unresponsive or unilateral imposition. It is not difficult to see that the second critique distills the xenophobic violence of the first and elevates it to the most extreme possible fanaticism. Where theoretical knowledge is open to a limited negotiation with alterity, practical or moral certainty is *forbidden* from entering into relation with anything

outside itself, except to issue commands. Kant's practical subject already pre-figures a deaf *führer*, barking impossible orders that seem to come from another world.

Kant makes a further strenuous effort to push forward the horizon of a priori synthesis in his third critique, *The Critique of Judgement*.[9] [9]Critique of Judgement, op. cit. If the first critique corresponds to appropriative economy or commodification, and the second critique corresponds to imperial jurisdiction, the third critique corresponds to the exercize of war at those margins of the global system that continue to resist both the market and the administration. It is concerned with the type of pleasure that is experienced when an object demonstrates an extra-juridical submission or abasement before the faculty of judgement; an experience which Kant associates with the contemplation of beauty. The first critique already exhibits a conception of excess or a priori synthesis that generalizes the principles of the labour market to all objects of theoretical cognition and transforms the understanding into a form of intellectual capital. In the third critique there is a far more aggressive conception of excess, which generates a feeling of delight, because it is essentially *extortionate*. This excess is not a surplus of certainty stemming from dimensions of objectivity possessed in advance of intuition, and thus by right, but rather a surplus of purchase upon the object. Kant argues that we have no transcendental right to expect natural laws to be sufficiently homogeneous for us to grasp. When confronting the heterogeneity of intuition, reason must engage in a kind of Pascalian wager; assuming an intelligible system of nature because it has nothing to lose by not doing so. The submission of the outside in general to the inside in general, or of nature to the idea, i.e. conquest, is not guaranteed by any principle. The capitalist feels a neutral satisfaction in the production of 'normal profits', but the conqueror feels exultation in the attainment of victory, precisely because there was no reason to expect it. Kant's advice to the imperial war-machine in his third critique can be summarized as this: "treat all resistance as if it were less than you might justifiably fear". The *Critique of Judgement* thus projects the global victory of capitalized reason as pure and exuberant ambition.

The only possible politics of purity is fascism, or a militant activism rooted in the inhibitory and exclusive dimensions of a metropolitanism. Racism, as a regulated, automatic, and indefinitely suspended process of genocide (as opposed to the hysterical and unsustainable genocide of the Nazis) is the real condition of persistence for a global economic system that is dependent upon an aggregate price of labour approximating to the cost of its bare

subsistence, and therefore upon an expanding pool of labour power which must be constantly 'stimulated' into this market by an annihilating poverty. If fascism is evaded in metropolitan societies it is only because a chronic passive genocide trails in the wake of capital and commodity markets as they displace themselves around the Third World, 'disciplining' the labour market, and ensuring that basic commodity prices are not high enough to distribute capital back into primary producer societies.

The forces most unambiguously antagonistic to this grotesque process are 'exogamic' (or, less humanistically, 'exotropic'); the synthetic energies that condition all surplus value, and yet co-exist with capital only under repression. A radical international socialism would not be a socialist ideology generalized beyond its culture of origin, but a programme of collectivity or unrestrained synthesis that springs from the theoretical and libidinal dissolution of national totality. To get to a world without nations would in itself guarantee the achievement of all immediately post-capitalist social and economic goals. It is this revolutionary requirement for a spontaneously *homeless* subversion that gives an urgency to certain possibilities of feminist politics, since the erasure of matrilineal genealogy within the patriarchal machine means that fascisizing valorizations of ancestry have no final purchase on the feminine 'subject'. The patronymic has irrecoverably divested all the women who fall under it of any recourse to an ethno-geographical identity; only the twin powers of father and husband suppress the nomadism of the anonymous female fluxes that patriarchy oppressively manipulates, violates, and psychiatrizes. By allowing women some access to wealth and social prestige the liberalization of patriarchy has sought to defuse the explosive force of this anonymity, just as capital has tended to reduce the voluptuous excess of exogamic conjugation to the stability of nationally segmented trading circuits. The increasingly incestual character of economic order–reaching its zenith in racist xenophobia–is easily masked as a series of 'feminist' reforms of patriarchy; as a de-commodification of woman, a diminution of the obliterating effects of the patronymic, and a return to the mother. This is the sentimental 'feminism' that Nietzsche despised, and whose petitbourgeois nationalist implications he clearly saw. The only resolutely revolutionary politics is feminist in orientation, but only if the synthetic forces mobilized under patriarchy are extrapolated beyond the possibility of assimilation, rather than being criticized from the perspective of mutilated genealogies. Genealogy as the dissipation of recuperative origins (Nietzsche), not as sentimental nostalgia.

The women of the earth are segmented only by their fathers and

husbands. Their praxial fusion is indistinguishable from the struggle against the micro-powers that suppress them most immediately. That is why the proto-fascism of nationality laws and immigration controls tends to have a sexist character as well as a racist one. It is because women are the historical realization of the potentially euphoric synthetic or communicative function which patriarchy both exploits and inhibits that they are invested with a revolutionary destiny, and it is only through their struggle that politics will be able to escape from all fatherlands. In her meticulous studies of patriarchy Luce Irigaray has amply demonstrated the peculiar urgency of the feminist question,[10] [10]Amongst the growing body of Luce Irigaray's work available in English the most powerful arguments are to be found, perhaps, in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, and in essays amongst those compiled in *This Sex which is not One*, especially 'Women on the market' (*Le marché da femmes*) and 'When the goods get together' (*Des marchandises entreelles*). although the political solutions she suggests are often feebly nostalgic, sentimental, and pacifistic. Perhaps only Monique Wittig has adequately grasped the inescapably *military* task faced by any serious revolutionary feminism,[11] [11]See especially: Monique Wittig, Les Gutrillhes, Paris 1969. and it is difficult not to be dispirited by the enormous reluctance women have shown historically to prosecute their struggle with sufficient ruthlessness and aggression. The left tends to be evasive about the numbing violence intrinsic to revolutionary war, and feminism is often particularly fastidious in this respect, even reverting to absurd mystical and Ghandian ideologies. If feminist struggles have been constantly de-prioritized in theory and practice it is surely because of their idealistic recoil from the currency of violence, which is to say, from the only definitive 'matter' of politics.

The state apparatus of an advanced industrial society can certainly not be defeated without a willingness to escalate the cycle of violence without limit. It is a terrible fact that atrocity is not the perversion, but the very motor of such struggles: the language of inexorable political will. A revolutionary war against a modern metropolitan state can only be fought in hell. It is this harsh truth that has deflected Western politics into an increasingly servile reformism, whilst transforming nationalist struggles into the sole arena of vigorous contention against particular configurations of capital. But, as I hope I have demonstrated, such nationalist struggles are relevant only to the geographical modulation of capital, and not to the radical jeopardizing of neo-colonialism (inhibited synthesis) as such. Victorious Third World struggles, so long as they have been successfully localized, do not lead to realistic post-capitalist achievements, and certainly not to post-patriarchal ones, since the conservation of the form of the nation state is itself enough to guarantee the reinsertion of a society into the system of inhibited

synthesis. For as long as the dynamic of guerilla war just leads to new men at the top—with all that this entails in terms of the communication between individuated sovereignties—history will continue to look bleak. For it is only when the pervasive historical bond between masculinity and war is broken by effective feminist violence that it will become possible to envisage the uprooting of the patriarchal endogamies that orchestrate the contemporary world order. With the abolition of the inhibition of synthesis—of Kantian thought—a sordid cowardice will be washed away, and cowardice is the engine of greed. But the only conceivable end of Kantianism is the end of modernity, and to reach this we must foster new Amazons in our midst.

Shamanic Nietzsche

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God said to Nietzsche:

That'll Tietzsche,

You irritating little Krietsche.

ANONYMOUS GRAFFITO

Will Christendom ever *reap the whirlwind* it has sown? That it should try to pass, without the vulnerability of interval, from a tyranny to joke, is certainly understandable, but that its enemies should do nothing to obstruct its evasion of nemesis is more puzzling. How can there be such indifference to the decline of our inquisitors? Is it that they succeed so exorbitantly in their project of domestication that we have been robbed of every impulse to bite back? Having at last escaped from the torture-palace of authoritarian love we shuffle about, numb and confused, flinching from the twisted septic wound of our past (now clumsily bandaged with the rags of secular culture). It is painfully evident that post-christian humanity is a of broken dogs.

Georges Bataille is the preeminent textual impediment to Christianity's carefully plotted *quiet death*; the prolongation of its terminal agonies into the twentieth century. Having definitively exhausted itself after two ugly millennia of species vivisection, Christianity attempts to skulk away from the scene, aided by the fog of supine tolerance which dignifies itself as 'post-modernity'. It does not take a genius to sec whose interests are served by this passage from militant theism to postmodern ambivalence.

A despot abandons any game that begins to turn out badly. This has been the case with metaphysics. From Kant onwards exploratory philosophy ceased to generate the outcomes favourable to established (theistic) power, and we were suddenly told: "this game is over, let's call it a draw". The authoritarian tradition of European reason tried to pull the plug on the great voyages *at exactly the point they first became interesting*, which is to say: atheistic, inhuman, experimental, and dangerous. Schopenhauer – refusing the agnostic stand-off of

antinomy – was the first rallying zone for all those disgusted by the contrived peace entitled 'the end of metaphysics'. Bataille is his most recent successor. The forces of antichrist are emerging fanged and encouraged from their scorched rat-holes in the wake of monotheistic hegemony, without the slightest attachment to the

paralytic tinkerings of deconstructive undecidability. 'An attitude which is neither military nor religious becomes insupportable in principle from the moment of death's arrival'.[1] [1] G. Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, 12 Vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-1988), vol. II, 246. The war has scarcely begun.

It is hard to imagine anything more ludicrous than Descartes, or Kant, having erected their humble philosophical dwellings alongside the baroque architectural excesses of the church, standing in the shadows of flying buttresses and asking pompously: how do we know the truth? It surely cannot solely be due to Nietzsche that we see the absurdity of an 'epistemological' question being asked in such surroundings. When a philosopher has a priest for a neighbour, which is to say, a practitioner of the most elaborately constructed system of mendacity ever conceived upon earth, how can a commitment to 'truth' in a positive sense even be under consideration? Truth in such situations is a privilege of the deaf. There is no question of 'error', 'weakness in reasoning', or 'mistaken judgment' when addressing the authoritative discourses on truth in the western tradition, those cathedrals of theological concept building that ground our 'common sense'; no, here one can only speak of a deeply rooted and fanatical *discipline of lying*. In other words, one fraction of the radicality of the atheistic thinking escalated through Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bataille is that it overthrows the high-bourgeois apologetic-epistemological problematic in modern philosophy by asking clearly for the first time: where do the lies stop?

The great educational value of the war against Christendom lies in the *absolute* truthlessness of the priest. Such purity is rare enough. The 'man of God' is entirely incapable of honesty, and only arises at the point where truth is defaced beyond all legibility. Lies are his entire metabolism, the air he breathes, his bread and his wine. He cannot comment upon the weather without a secret agenda of deceit. No word, gesture, or perception is slight enough to escape his extravagant reflex of falsification, and of the lies in circulation he will instinctively seize on the grossest, the most obscene and oppressive travesty. Any proposition passing the lips of a priest is *necessarily* totally false, excepting only insidiouses whose message is momentarily misunderstood. It is impossible to deny him without discovering some

buried fragment or reality.

There is no truth that is not war against theology, and even the word 'truth' has been plastered by the spittle of priestcraft. It cannot be attachment to some alternative conviction that cuts here, but only relentless refusal of what has been told. The dangerous infidels bypass dialectics. It is the sceptic who assassinates the lie.

Whenever its name has been anything but a jest, philosophy has been haunted by a subterranean question: What if knowledge were a means to deepen unknowing?

It is this thought alone that has differentiated it from the shallow things of the earth. Yet the glory and also the indignity of philosophy is to have sought the end of knowing, and no more.

Once blatant sophisms are exempted, the fact that scepticism has never been *enacted* is the sole argument of the dogmatists, and it is a powerful one, despite its empirical flavour. There can be little doubt that the philosophical advocates of disbelief have tended to exploit the very conventions they profess to despise as the shelter for an insincere madness. As was the case with Socrates, philosophy has sought to peel itself away from sophism by admitting to its ignorance, as if unknowing were a pathos to be confessed. Profound ecsanity ['Ecsane' - out of one's mind] alone is effective scepticism, in comparison to which sceptical philosophies fall prey to naive theories of belief, as if belief could simply be discarded, or withheld. We know nothing of course, but we do not remotely know even this, and mere assertion in no way ameliorates our destitution. Belief is not a possession but a prison, and we continue to believe in achieved knowledge even after denying it with intellectual comprehensiveness. The refusal to accept a dungeon is no substitute for a hole in the wall. Only in a voyage to the unknown is there real escape from conviction.

The dangerous sceptics are those Kant fears, 'a species of nomads, despising all settled modes of life'[2] [2] I. Kant, 'The Critique of Pure Reason, tr. N. K. Smith (NY: Palgrave Macmillan: 2003), Preface to the First Edition, 8. who come from a wilderness tract beyond knowledge. They are explorers, which is also to say: invasion routes of the unknown. It is by way of these inhumanists that the vast abrupt of shamanic zero - the Epoché of the ancients - infiltrates its contagious madness onto the earth.

Epoché is a word attributed to Pyrrho by way of indirect reportage, but in its absence the philosopher's name would lose what slight sense invests it. Although it might be argued that we owe Epoché to Pyrrho,

it is from Epoché that the name Pyrrho comes to us, as a cryptograph of the unknown. Even were it not for Pyrrho's silence – a silence far more *profound* that the literary abstinence of Socrates – Epoché would surely not be something of which we could straightforwardly know the truth, far less a method, or a subjective state.

Epoché is a report of the abrupt, and an escape.

1. [...]

2. the world of 'phenomena' is the adapted world which we feel to be real. The 'reality' lies in the continual recurrence of identical, familiar, related things in their logicized character, in the belief that here we are able to reckon and calculate;

3. the antithesis of this phenomenal world is not 'the true world,' but the formless unformulable world of the chaos of sensations - *another kind* of phenomenal world, a kind 'unknowable' for us;

4. questions, what things 'in-themselves' may be like, apart from our sense receptivity and the activity of our understanding, must be rebutted with the question: how could we know that things exist? 'Thingness' was first created by us. The question is whether there could not be many other ways of creating such an apparent world.[3] [3]F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, tr. W. Kaufmann (NY: Vintage, 1968), section 569.

How much industrialism lies buried in the notion of thought! As if one could ever *work things out*. One does not think one's way out, one gets out, and then sees (that it wasn't one ...).

Bataille's Nietzsche is not a locus of secular reason but of shamanic religion; a writer who escapes philosophical conceptuality in the direction of ulterior zones, and dispenses with the *thing in itself* because it is an item of intelligible representation with no consequence as a vector of becoming (of travel). Shamanism defies the transcendence of death, opening the tracts of 'voyages of discovery never reported'.[4] [4]A. Rimbaud, Collected Poems, tr. O. Bernard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 327. Against the grain of shallow phenomenalism that characterizes Nietzsche readings, Bataille pursues the fissure of abysmal scepticism, which passes out of the Kantian *Noumenon* (or intelligible object) through Kant and Schopenhauer's *thing in itself* (stripping away a layer of residual Platonism), and onwards in the direction of acategorial, epochal, or *base* matter that connects with Rimbaud's 'invisible splendours':[5] [5]Ibid., 296. the immense deathscapes of a 'universe without images'.[6] [6]Ibid., 293. Matter cannot be allotted a category without being retrieved for ideality, and the Nietzschean

problem with the *Ding an Sich* was not its supposed dogmatic materialism, but rather that it proposed 'an ideal form of matter',[7] [7]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. I, 179. as the transcendent (quarantined) site of integral truth, a 'real world'. There are no things-in-themselves because there are no things: 'thingness has only been invented by us owing to the requirements of logic'[8] [8]Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 558. (which ultimately revert to those of grammar). The Ding an Sich is a concept tailored for a God (supreme being) desperately seeking to hide itself: a cultural glitch turned nasty, but on the run at last. 'Root of the idea of substance in language, not in beings outside US'![9] [9]Ibid., section 562.

The antithesis of the apparent world and the true world is reduced to the antithesis 'world' and 'nothing'.[10] [10]Ibid., section 567.

Materialism is not a doctrine but an expedition, an Alpine break-out from socially policed conviction. It 'is before anything else the obstinate negation of idealism, which is to say of the very basis of *all* philosophy'.[11] [11]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. I, 220. Exploring acategorial matter navigates thought as chance and matter as turbulence 'beyond all regulation'.[12] [12]Ibid., vol. VI, 97. It yields no propositions to judge, but only paths to explore.

This is Nietzsche as a fanged poet at war with the philosophers (with the new priests), a thinker who seeks *to make life more problematic*. Bataille locks onto a desire that resonates with the reality that confounds us, and not with a 'rationality' that would extricate us from the labyrinth. Nietzsche is the great exemplar of complicating thought, exploiting knowledge in the interest of interrogations (and this is not in order to clarify and focus, but to subtilize and dissociate them) . Complicating thought strengthens the impetus of an active or energetic confusion – delirium – against the reactive forces whose obsessive tendency is to resolve or conclude. Rebelling against the fundamental drift of philosophical reasoning, it sides with thought against knowledge, against the tranquillizing prescriptions of the 'will to truth'.

If Nietzsche is locked in an extraordinarily furious struggle with philosophy it is because it is philosophy that has claimed, with the most cynical explicitness, to negate problems. Philosophy has always wanted to retire; Schopenhauer is simply its most honest exemplar. The 'absolute' is humanity's laziest thought. Nor does it suffice to argue that thought can be complicated within itself, or - as the philosophers have said for some time – 'immanently', for we know where this path of thinking leads. An intellection in need of immanent

critique is one that is already nudging against an ultimate solubility. ‘The intellect finds its limits within itself’ - it does not even need to move to consummate interrogation! It is thinking such as this, whose most eminent model is the Kant of the critical philosophy, that generated such distrust in Nietzsche for writers who work sitting down.

Wisdom (*sophia*) substitutes for traveling, Following it out into a Baudelairean caricature of the Voyage — redundantly reiterating a moral dogma - and to love it is to seek to be still. In obedience to narco-Platonic Eros, philosophy defers to the end of desire.

Nietzsche reaches back beyond this Hellenic priestphilosophizing, and forward beyond its modern limit, reassembling *sophia* as escape:

Indeed, we philosophers and ‘free spirits’ feel, when we hear the news that ‘the old god is dead,’ as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectations. At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an ‘open sea’.[13] [13]F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science, tc. W. Kaufmann (NY: Vintage, 1974), section 343.

The death of God is an opportunity, a chance. It makes sense to ask *what is meant* by the word ‘noumenon’, but ‘chance’ does not function in this way, since it is not a concept to be apprehended, but a direction in which to go. ‘To the one who grasps what chance is, how insipid the idea of God appears, and suspicious, and wing-clipping’![14] [14]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. VI, 116. Monotheism is the great gate-keeper, and where it ends the exploration of death begins. If there are places to which we are forbidden to go, it is because they can in truth be reached, or *because they can reach us*. In the end poetry is invasion and not expression, a trajectory of incineration; either strung-up in the cobwebs of Paradise, or strung-out into the shadow-torrents of hell. It is a route out of creation, which is to each their fate interpreted as enigma, as *lure*. ‘Now a hard, an inexorable voyage commences – a quest into the greatest possible distance’.[15] [15]Ibid., 29. ‘I said good-bye to the world’.[16] [16]Rimbaud, Collected Poems, 330. Even the most angelic curiosity – when multiplied to the power of eternity – must find its way to end in the abyss.

It can seem at times as if Bataille owes almost everything to Christianity; his understanding of the evil at the heart of erotic love,

the hysterical affectivity of his writing, along with its excremental obsession, its epileptoid conception of delight, its malignancy, the perpetual stench of the gutter. Yes, this is all very Christian; well attuned to a doctrine gestated in the sewers of LIte empire. Yet from out of the aberrant intensity and disorder of Bataille's writings *an impossible* proposition is perpetually reiterated: that far from being the acme of religion – let alone its telic blossoming – God is the principle of its suppression. The unity of *theos* is the tombstone of sacred zero, the crumbling granitic foundation of secular destitution. This is so exorbitantly true that the existence of God would be an even greater disaster for him than for us. How infinitely trivial the crucifixion of Jesus appears beside the degrading torture of being God, after all, existence is so indistinguishable from defilement that one turns pale at the very thought of an eternal being's *smell*. Perhaps this is why God 'is profoundly atheistic',[17] [17]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. V, 121. leading Bataille to remark that '[w]hilst I am God, I deny him to the depths of negation'[18] [18]Ibid., 152. 'nihilism ... might be a *divine* way of thinking[image][19] [19]Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 15. Nietzsche anticipates). God can only redeem the universe from its servility by burning his creation into ash and annihilating himself. Such is the 'God of blinding sun, ... this God of death that I sought'.[20] [20]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. IV, 203. Bataille invokes the dark undertow of a self-butchering divinity: 'God of despair, give me ... your heart . .. which no longer tolerates that you exist'.[21] [21]Ibid., vol. v, 59. (If God is an explorer, then there is no God.)

Bataille's texts are 'a hecatomb of words without gods or reason to be',[22] [22]Ibid., 220. led back down through the crypts of the West by a furious impulse to dissociate theism and religion, and thus to return the sacred to its shamanic impiety, except that nothing can ever simply return, and Hell will never be an innocent underworld again. The depths have become infernal, really so, quite irrespective of the fairy tales we are still told. '[F]lames surround us / the abyss opens beneath our feet'[23] [23]Ibid., vol. III, 95. reports Bataille from the brink of the impossible, 'an abyss that does not end in the satiate contemplation of an absence'[24] [24]Ibid., vol. V, 199. Ibid., vol. IV,17. 06 Ibid., vol. V, 246. because its lip is the charred ruin of even the most sublimed subjectivity. 'I have nothing to do in this world', he writes, '[i]f not to burn'.[25] [25]Ibid., vol IV, 17. 'I suffer from not burning... approaching so close to death that I respire it like the breath of a lover'.[26] [26]Ibid., vol. V, 246. It is not only due to the inquisition that all the great voyagers have for a long time been *singed*. For well over a century all who have wanted to see have seen: no profound exploration can be launched from the ruins of monotheism unless it draws its resources from

damnation.

The death of God is a religious event - a transgression, experiment in damnation, and stroke of anti theistic warfare - but this is not to say it is pre-eminently a crime. Hell has no interest in our debauched moral currency. To confuse reactive dabblings in sin with expeditions in damnation is Christian superficiality; the Dantean error of imagining that one could earn oneself an excursion in Hell, as if the infernal too was a matter of justice.

Our crimes are mere stumblings on the path to ruin, just as every projected *Hell on Earth* is a strict exemplar of idolatry. Transgression is not criminal action, but tragic fate; the intersection of an economically programmed apocalypse with the religious antihistory of poetry. It is the inevitable occurrence of impossibility, which is not the same as death, but neither is it essentially different.

This ambivalence responds to that of death 'itself', which is not ontological but labyrinthine: a relapse of composition that is absolute to discontinuity, yet is nothing at the level of immanence. The very individuality that would condition the possibility of a proprietary death could only be achieved if death were impossible. One dies because discontinuity is never realized, but this means that there is never 'one' who dies. Instead there is an unthinkable communication with zero, immanence, or the sacred. 'There is no feeling that throws one into exuberance with greater force than that of nothingness. But exuberance is not at all annihilation; it is the surpassing of the shattered attitude, it is transgression'.[27] [27] Ibid., vol. X, 72.

The question of the mere 'truth' of Christianity - whether in regard of its origin, not to speak of Christian astronomy and natural science - is a matter of secondary importance as long as the question of the value of Christian morality is not considered.[28] [28] Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 251.

What if eternal recurrence were not a belief? ('The most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that every belief ... is necessarily false because there simply *is no true world*'.)[29] [29] Ibid., section 15. Bataille suggests:

The return *immotivates* the instant, freeing life from an end and in this ruining it straight away. The return is .,. the desert of one for whom each instant henceforth finds itself immotivated.[30] [30] Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. VI , 23.

Christianity - the exemplary moral 'religion' – 'substituted slow

suicide'[31] [31]Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 247. and representation (belief) for shamanic contact with zero-interruption, but with the (re-)emergence of nihilistic recurrence, caution, prudence, every kind of 'concern for time to come'[32] [32]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. VI , 50, 167. is restored to the senselessness of cosmic 'noise'. With recurrence comes a 'future, [which is] not the prolongation of myself across time, but the expiry of a being going further, passing attained limits'.[33] [33]Ibid., 29. A religious crisis can no longer be deferred.

In the final phase of Nietzsche's intellectual life the eternal recurrence is grasped as a weapon, a 'hammer,' the transmission element between diagnosis and intervention. Where Christendom recuperates decline to preservation, deflecting it from its intensive plummet to zero, eternal recurrence re-opens its abyssal prospect, precipicing affect onto death. This is the predominant sense of 'selection' in Nietzsche's texts; a vertiginous extrication of zero from the series of preservative values, cutting through 'the ambiguous and cowardly compromise of a religion such as Christianity: more precisely, such as the church: which, instead of encouraging death and self-destruction, protects everything ill-constituted and sick and makes it propagate itself'.[34] [34]Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 247.

The notes assembled into section 55 of The Will to Power develop this thread. Either 'existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness' (a box), or 'the nothing (the "meaningless"), eternally'.[35] [35]Ibid., section 55. The nihilism of recurrence is ambivalent between its (Christian) historical sense as the constrictive deceleration of zero and its cosmic (nonlocal) virtuality as a gateway onto death. Christendom is to be attacked because it was its morality that protected life against despair and the leap into nothing'.[36] [36]Ibid.

Morality guarded the underprivileged against nihilism. . . Supposing that the faith in this morality would perish, then the underprivileged would no longer have their comfort - and they would perish.[37] [37]Ibid.

The religious history of mankind is based upon a technics of ill-health: dehydration, starvation, mutilation, deprivation of sleep, a general 'self-destruction of the underprivileged: self-vivisection, poisoning, intoxication'.[38] [38]Ibid. A journey was underway which Christian preservative moralism - generalized species cowardice - privatized, representationalized, crushed under the transcendent phallus, froze, obstructed, and drove elsewhere. Christianity is a device for trapping the sick, but recurrence melts through the cages:

What does ‘underprivileged’ mean? Above all, physiologically – no longer politically. The unhealthiest kind . . . (in all classes) furnishes the soil for this nihilism: they will experience the belief in the eternal recurrence as a curse, struck by which one no longer shrinks from any action; not to be extinguished but to extinguish everything.[39] [39]Ibid.

To relate sickness to death as cause to effect is itself a sign of health. Their morbid interconnection is quite different. Sickness is not followed by death within the series of ordered representation. It opens the gates.

Genealogy does not reduce sickness to a historical topic, since sickness – the inability to suspend a stimulus – eludes mere unfolding in progressive time, tending towards the disappearance of time in epochal interruption. The reflex-spasm at (and by) which reactivity gropes is the continuum beneath the crust of health. Death is ‘that which has no history’,[40] and Nietzsche’s method is syphilis. ‘Only religion assures a consumption that destroys the proper substance of those that it animates’.[41]

Philosophy is a ghoul that haunts only ruins, and the broken croaks of our hymns to sickness have scarcely begun. Borne by currents of deep exhaustion that flow silent and inexorable beneath the surface perturbations of twitch and chatter, damned, shivering, claw-like fingers hewn from torture and sunk into wreckage drawn with unbearable slowness down into the maw of flame and snuffed blackness twisted skewerish into fever-hollowed eyes. Eternal recurrence is our extermination, and we cling to it as infants to their mother’s breasts.

’Poetry leads from the known to the unknown’ writes BataiIle,[42] in words that resonate with Rimbaud. Poetry is fluent silence, the only venture of writing to touch upon the sacred (=0), because ‘the unknown ... is not distinguished from nothingness by anything that discourse can announce’.[43] To write the edge of the impossible is a against discursive order, and an incitement to the unspeakable: ‘poetry is immoral’.[44]

Rimbaud writes from the other side of Zarathustrean descent/death [*Untergang*], anticipating the labyrinthine spaces of a Nietzsche for the sick, and of what escapes from/due to the cultural convulsion Nietzsche reinforces. ‘The poet makes himself a visionary by a long, immense and rational *deregulation of all the senses*’,[45] and this deregulation is a source of ’[i]neffable torture’ ,[46] ‘the sufferings are enormous’[47] Rimbaud insists. No organism is adapted to ‘arrive at the

unknown',[48] which makes deregulation as necessary as it makes pain inevitable. Our nerves squeal when they are re-strung upon the phylogenetically unanticipated, 'experiences strike too deeply; memory becomes a festering wound':[49] a descent into the inferno. *Nuit de l'enfer*, where the entrails of nature dissolve meanderous into lava, 'this is hell, eternal pain',[50] and Rimbaud burns, 'as is necessary'.[51]

Yes, the poet must be a visionary. The East knows a true lucidity, but to be an inheritor of the West is to hack through jungles of indiscipline, devoured by vile ants and words unstrung from sense, until the dripping foliage of delirium opens out onto a space of comprehensive ruin. This has never been understood, nor can it be. The foulness of our fate only deepens with the centuries, as the tracts of insanity sprawl. From bodies gnawed by tropical fevers we swim out through collapse to inexistence in forever, destined for Undo.

True poetry is *hideous*, because it is base communication, in contrast to pseudo-communicative discourse, which presupposes the isolation of the terms it unites. Communication - in the transgressive non-sense Bataille lends it - is both an utter risk and an unfathomable degradation, associated with *repellent* affect. The ego emerges in the flight from communicative immanence, from deep or unholy community, initiating a history that leads to the bitter truth of the desertification of the isolated being. From the anxiety of base contact, which it can only experience as dissolution, the ego stumbles into the *ennui* of autonomy, the antechamber to a harsh despair, whose horror is accentuated by the fact that it arises at the point where escape has exhausted itself, where the ego has quarantined itself to the limit of its being against extraneous misfortune. *Ennui* is not any sort of response to the compromising of the ego from without, it is not an impurity or a contamination (the negation of such things are for it a condition of existence), but rather, it is the very truth of achieved being; the core affect of personal individuality. *Ennui* cannot be mastered, surpassed, resolved, *aufgehoben*, because it is nothing but the distillate of such operations, indeed, of action as such. *Ennui* is insinuated into the very fabric of project, as 'the necessity of leaving oneself'.[52] If the soil of Bataille's writing is volcanic it is not only due to the sporadic convulsions of a devastating incandescence, but also because its fertility is anticipated by a monstrous sterilization. Beneath and before the luxuriant jungles of delirium is the endless crushing ash-plain of despair.

'I believe that I am in hell, therefore I am there'.[53] Blake might have written such words, although their sense would then have been quite different. Drooled from Rimbaud's pen they point less to a

potency of imagination than to a geological crisis of justification, approaching a perfect epistemological irresponsibility. It is not for us to defend the rights of truth, truth is decreed by the masters. What matters is to adapt, nursing the meager resources of our reactivity, of our base cunning. 'Belief' – the cloak of confession - is too precious a resource to be squandered on the zealotry of idealism. What value is there to be extracted from a committed belief, from a last-ditch belief? Such things are for the strong (or for dupes), for the allies and slaves of light, for all those who do not rely on the subterranean passages beneath belief to avoid the panoptic apparatuses. Adaptability can only be lamed by commitments. We have seen enough true Christians: rabbits transfixed by headlights. When draped about the inferiors beliefs are not loyalties, but rather sun-blocks against inquisition. We creatures of shadow are hidden from their enlightenment. We believe exactly what they want.

The inferior race 'await God with greed',[54] scavenging at Christ 'like wolves at an animal they have not killed'.[55] Creation, testamental genealogy, the passion of Christ... none of it is their story, nor is any other, for they are too indolent to have a story of their own, only theft and lies are 'proper' to them: 'pillage'.[56] Rimbaud's inheritance, 'above all', consists of 'mendacity and sloth'[57] 'I have never been a Christian; I am of the race which sung under torture'[58] he remarks. It is precisely obliviousness to Christianity, to fidelity or duty, to privileged narratives, that eases the inferior race into singing the praises of the Nazarene. The white man has guns, *therefore* the truth. 'The whites disembark. The cannon! It is necessary to submit to baptism, dress oneself, work' .[59]

In contrast to the pompous declarations of the orthodoxies, which come from on high (like a stroke of the whip), an infernal message is subterranean, a whisper from the nether-regions of discourse, since 'hell is certainly below'.[60] Just as the underworld is not a hidden world - a real or true [*Wahre Welt*] - but is that hidden by all worlds, so is the crypt-mutter from hell something other than an inverted scene, concept, or belief. In their infernal lineaments words are passages, leading into and through lost mazes, and not edifications. Acquisition is sible in hell. There is nothing *en bas* except wandering amongst emergences, and what is available has always come strangely, without belonging. Infernal *low-life* has no understanding for property. Even the thoughts of the inferior ones are camouflage and dissimulation, their beliefs mere chameleon dapplings of the skin.

Poetry does not strut logically amongst convictions, it seeps through crevices; a magmic flux resuscitated amongst vermin. If it was

not that the Great Ideas had basements, fissures, and vacuoles, poetry would never infest them. Faiths rise and fall, but the rats persist.

Rimbaud's *saison en enfer* pulsates through a discourse without integrity. Teaching nothing, it infects. Like matter cooked-through with pestilential 'contagions of energy',[61] it collapses into a swarm of plague-vectors. Substance is only its host. '[W]ords, books, monuments, symbols, and laughters are nothing but the paths of this contagion, its passages'[62]

I never could conclude anything...

Zero does that.

Towards New Seas

That way is my will; I trust

In my mind and in my grip.

Without plan, into the vast

Open sea I head my ship.

All is shining, new and newer,

Upon space and time sleeps noon;

Only your eye - monstrously,

Stares at me, infinity.[63]

Art as Insurrection: the Question of Aesthetics in Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche

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Artists; those savage beasts that can't get enough of too much.

LAND

I

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* is the site where art irrupts into European philosophy with the force of trauma. The ferocious impetus of this irruption was only possible in an epoch attempting to rationalize itself as permanent metamorphosis, as growth. Which means that it is a trauma quite incommensurable with the sort of difficulties art has posed to western philosophy since Plato, for it is no longer a matter of irritation, but of catastrophe. Our own.

The consistency of Kant's critical philosophy throughout all three of the great *Critiques* rests in the attention to excess inherent in the conception of synthetic a priori judgments.

The very inception of the critical project lay in Kant's decisive response to the voiding of logical metaphysics – the disintegration of the philosophical endeavour to reduce synthesis – that was consummated by Hume. Perhaps nothing was clearer to Kant than the radical untenability of the Leibnizian paradigm of metaphysics, still dominant in the (Wolfian) philosophy of the Prussian state. Logicism had been exposed, by the sceptical and empirical thought of a more advanced social system, as a sterile tautological stammering that belonged to the Middle Ages when positivity had been given in advance. It was with extraordinary resolve that Kant jettisoned the deductive systematization that had characterized the philosophies of immobilist societies – philosophies deeply and deliberately rooted in stagnant theism – and replaced it with the metaphysics of excess. He was even prepared to assist in the razing of all theoretical theology; because philosophy, too, had to become (at least a little) revolutionary. Nothing substantial was any longer to be presupposed.

Although the hazards of synthesis – of having to think -were clearly no longer eliminable, Kant still dung to the prospect that they could be traversed and definitively concluded. Philosophy would have to *take some ground*, but it could still anticipate a place of rest; an impregnable defensive line. If history could no longer be avoided, at least it could be brought swiftly and meticulously to its end.

lime would have to be transcendentally determined, once and for all, by a new metaphysics. It would thenceforth just continue, without disruption, in an innocent confirmation of itself. For a while – a period some time between the early 1770s and 1790 – it is possible that Kant was as cheerful as any bourgeois philosopher has ever been. An ephemeral restabilization had been achieved. Then came disaster. Something was still shockingly out of control. A third *Critique* was necessary.

The terrifying insight that drove Kant into the labyrinthine labours of the *Critique of Judgment* was that utter chaos had still not been outlawed by an understanding whose pretension was to 'legislate for nature'. Kant's own words are these:

although this [the pure understanding] makes up a system according to transcendental laws, which contain the condition of possibility for experience as such, it would still be possible that there be an infinite multiplicity of empirical laws and such a great heterogeneity of natural forms belonging to the experience that the concept of a system according to these (empirical) laws must be totally alien to the understanding, and neither the possibility, even less the necessity of such a totality could be conceived.[1] [1]Kant, Kritik der Urteilskraft, ed. W. Weischedel (Wiesbaden: Suhrkampf, 1974), 16. Where both original texts and translation are given I have sometimes translated directly from the original, and sometimes cited the English version without modification. For a recent English translation, see I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, tr. P. Guyer, E. Matthews (Cambridge/NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), First Introduction, II, 9.

There are few horrors comparable to that of the master legislator who realizes that *anarchy is still permitted*. Far from having been domesticated by the transcendental forms of understanding, nature was still a freely flowing wound that needed to be staunched. This was going to be far more messy and frightening than anything yet undertaken, but Kant gritted his yellowing teeth, and began.

He found the resource for his new and final campaign in the negative disorder which he called 'beauty'. When compared to the rigorous order of form, beauty was an altogether fragile and impermanent discipline. It was something the transcendental subject

could not promise itself. Nevertheless, it seemed that something beyond reason, something that was prepared to get its hands dirty, was keeping nature down. 'Purposiveness without purpose', Kant's last name for excess, has all the extravagance of triumph. Even without trying, we win. History is written by the victors and ascendancy is presupposed as the condition of presentation, so that the submission of nature to exorbitant law is given with the objectivity of experience:

It is thus a subjectively necessary transcendental presupposition that unlimited dissimilarity of empirical laws and heterogeneity of natural forms does not arise, but that it rather, through the affinity of the particular laws under more general ones, qualifies as an experience, as an empirical system.[2] [2]Ibid., 22; Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgment, First IV, 14.

All those martialled formulas: nature takes the shortest way – she does nothing in vain – there is no leap in the multiplicity of forms (*continuum formarum*) – she is rich in species, but yet thrifty in genuses, and so forth, are nothing other than just this transcendental expression of judgment, setting itself a principle for experience as a system and thus for its own needs.[3] [3]Ibid., 23; 14.

Experience is thought of in terms of an extravagant but explosive inheritance; an ungrounded adaptation of nature to the faculties of representation. The increasingly tortured and paradoxical formulations that Kant selects indicate the precarious character of the luxuriance (stocked and expended in the imagination as 'free-play'). Consider just one example: 'Purposiveness is a lawfulness of the accidental as such.'[4] [4]Ibid., 30; 20.

Like Marx's Ricardo, it is the extraordinary cynicism of Kantianism at the edge of its desperation that lends it a profound radicality. Kant's 'reason' is a reactive concept, negatively defined against the pathology with which it has been locked in perpetual and brutal war. In the third *Critique* all inhibition is lifted from this conflict; it becomes gritty, remorseless, cruel. His theory of the sublime, for instance, is sheer exultation in an insensate violence [*Gewalt*] against the pre-conceptual (animal) powers summarized under the faculty of the 'imagination'. In the experience of the sublime nature is affirmed as the trigger for a 'negative-pleasure', in so far as it humiliates and ruins that part of ourselves that we fail to share with the angels. To take one instance (out of innumerable possibilities) he says of the sublime that it is:

something terrifying for sensibility . . . which for all that, has an attraction for us, arising from the fact of its being a violence which reason unleashes upon sensibility with a view to extending its own

domain (the practical) and letting sensibility look out beyond itself into the infinite, which is an abyss for it.[5] [5]Ibid., 189-90; tr. J. C. Meredith in *The Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1982), 115.

Kant is becoming remarkably indiscriminate about his allies, asking only that they be enemies of pathological inclination [*Neigung*], and know how to fight. If reason is so secure, legitimate, supersensibly guaranteed, why all the guns?

Irrational surplus, or the ineliminable and beautiful *danger* of unconscious creative energy: nature with fangs. How do we hold on to this thought? It is perpetually by collapse; by a reversion to a depressive philosophy of work, whether theological or humanistic. The three great strands of post-Kantian exploration – marked by the names Hegel, Schelling, and Schopenhauer – are constantly tempted by the prospect of a reduction to forgotten or implicit labour; to the agency of God, spirit, or man, to anything that would return this ruthless artistic force of the generative unconscious to design, intention, project, teleology. Kant's word 'genius' is the immensely difficult and confused but emphatic resistance to such reductions; the thought of an utterly impersonal creativity that is historically registered as the radical discontinuity of the example, of irresponsible legislation, as 'order' without anyone giving the orders.

Kant is quite explicit that a generative theory of art requires a philosophy of genius – a re-admission of accursed pathology into its very heart – and one only has to read the second *Critique* alongside the third to notice the immense disruption that art inflicts upon philosophy. Kant only manages to control this disruption by maintaining art as an implicitly marginal problematic within a field mastered by philosophy. Even though he acknowledges that the autonomy of reason is to the heteronomy of genius what fidelity of representation is when compared to creation – poverty and wretchedness – the message scarcely seeps out. In addition, there is a perpetual and pathetic effort to subsume aesthetics under practical imperatives, 'beauty as the symbol of ethical life'[6] [6]Ibid., 294-9; 221-5. being one example, and the basic tendency of his theory of the sublime (the infinite privilege of transcendental ideas in comparison to nature) being another.

Despite superficial appearances it is not with the thought of noumenal subjectivity that the unconscious is announced within western philosophy, for this thought is still recuperable as a prereflexive consciousness, so innocuous that even Sartre is happy to accept it. It is rather out of an intertwining of two quite different

strands of the Kantian text that the perturbing figure of the energetic unconscious emerges: first, the heteronomous pathological inclination whose repression is presupposed in the exercise of practical reason, and second, genius, or nature in its 'legislative' aspect. The genius 'cannot indicate how this fantastic and yet thoughtful ideas arise and come together in his head, because he himself does not know, and cannot, therefore, teach it to anyone'.[7] [7] Ibid., 244; 170.

It is no doubt comforting to speak of 'the genius' as if impersonal creative energy were commensurable with the order of autonomous individuality governed by reason, but such chatter is, in the end, absurd. Genius is nothing like a character trait, it does not belong to a psychological lexicon; far more appropriate is the language of seismic upheaval, inundation, disease, the onslaught of raw energy from without. One 'is' a genius only in the sense that one 'is' a syphilitic, in the sense that 'one' is violently problematized by a ferocious exteriority. One returns to the subject of which genius has been predicated to find it charred and devastated beyond recognition.

II

Schopenhauer reconstructed the critical philosophy in several very basic ways: by eliminating the dogmatic presupposition of a difference between subjective and objective noumena; by shifting, not in an idealist (phenomenological) direction, but towards unconscious will; by simplifying the transcendental understanding from the twelve categories and two forms of sensibility inherited from Kant to the integrated 'principle of sufficient reason'; by nipping Kant's proto-idealist logicism in the bud; by charging the critical philosophy with the furious energy of sexual torment, attacking its (at least) germinal academicism, and immeasurably improving its stylistic resources. Where Kant distorts, marginalizes, and obscures the thought of the unconscious, Schopenhauer emphasizes and develops it. He defies the pretensions of imperalistic idealism by describing reason as a derivative abstraction from the understanding, co-extensive with language, so that Kant's transcendental logic is rethought through a transcendental aesthetic organized in terms of the 'principle of sufficient reason', simplified, de-mystified, and pushed downwards towards pre-intellectual intuition. Reason is no longer thought of as an autonomous principle in reciprocal antagonism with nature, but as a film upon its surface. All these moves involve a massive shift in the 'will' [*Wille*], the placeholder for the psycho-analytical comprehension of desire.

For Kant, the will is aligned with reason, as the principle of the

investment of nature with intentional intelligibility, the resource from which teleological judgment must regulatively metaphorize all exorbitant natural order:

The will, as the faculty of desire, is one of the many natural causes in the world, namely, that one which is effective through concepts, and everything that is represented as possible (or necessary) through a will is called practically possible (or necessary), in contradistinction from the physical possibility or necessity of an affect for which the ground is not determined in its causality through concepts (but rather, as with lifeless matter, through mechanism, and, with animals, through instinct).[8] [8] Ibid., 79; 9.

In contrast, Schopenhauer's great discovery is that of non-agentic will; the positivity of the death of God. Rather than thinking willing a s the movement by which articulate decision is realized in nature, he understands the appearance of rational decisions as a derivative consequence of pre-intellectual – and ultimately pre-personal, even pre-organic – willing. Unconscious desire is not just desire that happens to be unconscious, as if a decisionistic lucidity is somehow natural or proper to desire; it is rather that consciousness can only be consequential upon a desire for which lucid thought is an instrumental requirement. For Schopenhauer the intellect is constituted by willing, rather than being constitutive for it. *We do not know what we want.*

There is an important sense in which Schopenhauer's will is the thought of genius taken towards its limit, subsuming the entire faculty of knowledge under that of exorbitant natural order, as a mere instance (although a privileged one) of purposiveness without purpose. But Schopenhauer's own usage of the thought of genius preserves it in its specificity, as a proportional exorbitance on the part of the intellect in relation to the will. Genius is the result of a positive overcoming of unconscious 'purpose', an excess of intellectual energy over that which can be absorbed by desire, thus redundancy, or dysfunction through superfluity:

an entirely pure and objective picture of things is not reached in the normal mind, because its power of perception at once becomes tired and inactive, as soon as this is not spurred on and set in motion by the will. For it has not enough energy to apprehend the world purely objectively from its own elasticity and without a purpose. On the other hand, where this happens, where the brain's power of forming representations has such a surplus that a pure, dis· tinct, objective picture of the external world exhibits itself without a purpose as something useless for the intentions of the will, which is even

disturbing in the higher degrees, and can even become injurious to them - then there already exists at least the natural disposition for that abnormality. This is denoted by the name of genius, which indicates that something foreign to the will, i.e., to the I or ego proper, a genius added from outside so to speak, seems to become active here.[9] [9]A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, in Werke in zehn II (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), 446; translated by E.F.J. Payne as *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. II (NY: Dover, 1966), 377.

The mother of the useful arts is necessity; that of the fine arts superfluity and abundance. As their father, the former have understanding, the latter genius, which in itself a kind of superfluity, that of the power of knowledge beyond the measure required for the service of the will.[10] [10]Ibid., 484; 410.

For Schopenhauer the body is the objectification of the will, the intellect is a function of a particular organ of the body, and genius is the surplus of that functioning in relation to the individual organism in question. Genius is thus an assault on the individualized will that erupts from out of the reservoir of archaic pre-organized willing. I t is a site of particular tension in his thinking, caught between a vision of progressive redemption, achieved through humanity as perfected individuality in which the will is able to renounce itself, and regressive unleashing of the pre-individual will from the torture chamber of organic specificity, ego-interests, and personality. Schopenhauer's attachment to the first of these options is well known, but the possibility of an alternative escape from individualization – by way of dissolution into archaic inundating desire – constantly strains for utterance within his text.

This tension generates a terminological fission that can be easily detected along the jagged fault lines separating sexuality from art. One example is 'beauty'; a word that is driven by Schopenhauer's overt (metaphysical) policy into an uneasy alignment with renunciation. He interprets it as the negative affect – relief or release – associated with disengagement from interested thought, attained through contemplative submergence in the pure universal 'ideas' of natural species as they exist outside space, time, and causality, and manifest to a radicalized Kantian disinterestedness that is greatly facilitated by artistic representation.[11] [11]Of all the complex issues I have skimmed over recklessly this perhaps the richest and most impacted. Schopenhauer, by referring exorbitant form back to a Platonic *eidos* is undoubtedly sacrificing a great deal of the fertile tension in Kant's thought of purposiveness without purpose, although he also reduces the risk of a slide back into teleological theology. The thought was perhaps necessary order to depart most radically from the possibility of theistic relapse was that of a divine eliminating all possibility of agentic creation at any level. But this would be the image of a mad god. Dionysus?

If in the end Derrida's *Spurs* is an absurd book, it is because it is tapping into Nietzsche's negotiation with Schopenhauer's discourse on woman and the aesthetic without knowing what it is listening to, because it is too busy perpetuating the Heideggerian mutilation of libidinal post-Kantianism. Nietzsche's recovery and affirmation of the fictive power of art (in his later writings) is a response to the violent denigration of this power in Schopenhauer's thought, a denigration that is programmed by a complex of factors that are evidenced with particular intensity in his discussion of sexual difference. Schopenhauer founds the modern thought of excitement as suffering, a thought which survives into the twentieth century in a variety of guises, and most importantly in Freud's libidinal economy. In order to a rhythm of and its tranquilization, in which there is no space for positive pleasure, but only variable degrees of pain, it is necessary to be profoundly *misled*. This is why Schopenhauer refers to the principle of sufficient reason, which is associated with the pure form of material reality, and is the transcendental condition of individuated appearance, as the veil of *Maya*, or illusion. Art, as the escape from individuation and desire, is thus the very negative of fiction. Beauty is an experience of truth.

But there is also another troubling, enticing, arousing, and captivating type of beauty (Nietzsche will come to say it is the only one), the beauty that is exemplified - in post-Hellenic western history at least - in the female body. For Schopenhauer this is an immense problem, as is the domain of the erotic in its entirety. The anegoic disinterestedness of resignation is echoed and parodied by an indifference to ego-interests that leads in a quite opposite direction; *deeper into the inferno of willing*. After acknowledging with his usual raw honesty that 'all amorousness is rooted in the sexual impulse alone',[12] [12] Ibid., 624; 555. Schopenhauer is forced to accept that 'it is precisely this not seeking *one's own* interest, everywhere the stamp of greatness, which gives even to passionate love a touch of the sublime, and makes it a worthy subject of poetry'.

There is thus both a renunciatory and a libidinous sublime, each with its associated objects and aesthetic 'perfections' or intensities. And it is not only beauty that is torn in separate directions, fiction too is split; on the one hand as the condition of individualization, and on the other as an appeal to constituted individuality. Either the ego is a dream of desire, or desire has to creep up on the ego as a dream. In sexuality,

nature can attain her end only by implanting in the individual a certain delusion, and by virtue of this, that which in truth is merely a

good thing for the species seems to him to be a good thing for himself, so that he serves the species, whereas he is under the *delusion* that he is serving himself. In this process a mere chimera, which vanishes immediately afterwards, floats before him, and, as motive, takes the place of a reality. This *delusion is instinct*. In the great majority of cases, instinct is to be regarded as the sense of the species which presents to the will what is useful to *it*.[13] [13] Ibid., 630; 538.

Woman is matter, formless and unpresentable, arousing and thus tormenting; everything about her is pretence, deception, alteration, unlocalizable irrational attraction, *Verstellung*. Schopenhauer's notorious essay *On Woman* is mapped by the movement of this word, as it organizes the play of seduction, of indirect action, of non-ideal beauty, disrupting the seriousness and responsible self-legislation of the male subject through an 'art of dissimulation'.[14] [14] A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena* II (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), 671; tr. by E. F. J. Payne as *Parerga and Paralipomena*, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 617. Woman is wicked art, art that intensifies life, art whose only truth is a whispered intimation that negation, too, is only a dream, the figment of an overflowing positivity that deceives through excess. Could the dream of redemption be nothing but a bangle upon the arms of exuberant life? Schopenhauer reels in horror:

Only the male intellect, clouded by the sexual impulse, could call the undersized, narrow-shouldered, broadhipped, and short-legged sex the fair sex; for in this impulse is to be found its whole beauty. The female sex could be more aptly called the *unaesthetic*.[15] [15] Ibid., 673; 619.

Women are so terribly non-Platonic, so outrageously vital and real, so excessive in relation to the cold sterile perfections of the ideas. With infallible instinctive power they propagate the dangerous delusion that there is something about life that we want. Pessimism has to be misogyny, because woman refuses to repel.

III

A few of the things that Nietzsche learnt – at least in part – from Schopenhauer were the elementary tenets of libidinal materialism or the philosophy of the energetic unconscious (the unrestricted development of the theory of genius), the primacy of the body and its medical condition, pragmatism (asking not how we know but why we know), effervescent literary brilliance, aestheticism (with a musical focus), an 'aristocratic' concern for hierarchy and gradation (which he turned into an implement for overcoming Aristotelian logic), antihumanism, a construction of the history of philosophy as

dominated by Plato and Kant and the problematic of reality and appearance, virulent anti-academicism, misogyny, and the distrust of mathematical thinking. Schopenhauer even wrote that:

The genuine symbol of nature is universally and everywhere the circle, because it is the schema or form of recurrence; in fact, this is the most general form in nature. She carries it through in everything from the course of the constellations down to the death and birth of organic beings. In this way alone, in the restless stream of time and its content, a continued existence, i.e., a nature, becomes possible.[16] [16] A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* II, ii, 559; tr. Payne in *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 11, 477.

But the shifts Nietzsche had brought to the Schopenhauerian philosophy by the end of his creative life were at least as immense as this inheritance, involving, amongst elements, a displacement from the will to life to the will to power, so that survival is thought of as a tool or resource for creation; a displacement of antihumanism from the ascetic ideal to overman (non-terminal overcoming); the completion of a post-Aristotelian 'logic' of gradation without negativity or limits; a 'critique of philosophy' that diagnosed Plato and Kant as symptoms of libidinal disaster; a return of historical thinking freed from the untenable time/timelessness opposition of bankrupt logicism; and a displacement from the principle of sufficient reason to 'equalization' [*Ausgleichung*], which – since differentiation was no longer thought of as an imposition of the subject – implied a shift from primordial unity to irreducible pluralism, and from the disinterested 'worldeye' to perspectivism.

Nietzsche's intricate, profound, and explosive response to the provocation of Schopenhauer resists hasty summarization. It is helpful to start with the transitional movements of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which the Schopenhauerian will is re-baptized as 'Dionysus'. Like the undifferentiated will, it is only in the dream of Apollonian appearance that Dionysus can be individualized. As Walter Otto remarks (about the mythological, not just the specifically Nietzschean god): 'He is clearly thought of on the oriental pattern as the divine or infinite in general, in which the individual soul longs so much to lose itself'[17] [17] W. F. Otto, *Dionysos, Mythos und Kultus* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1933), 115. The tragic chorus is the focus of a delirious fusion, in which the personality is liquidated by the collective artistic process. Otto says some other very important things about Dionysus, the twice-born:

The one so born is not merely the exultant one and joy·bringer, he is also the suffering and dying god, the god of tragic contradiction. And the inner power of this dual nature is so great, that he steps amongst

humanity as a storm, quaking them and subduing their resistance with the whip of madness. Everything habitual and ordered must be scattered. Existence suddenly becomes an intoxication – an introduction of blessedness, but no less one of terror.

To this female world the Apollonian stands opposed, as the decidedly masculine. The mystery of life, of blood and of terrestrial force does not rule in it, but rather clarity and breadth of spirit. But the Apollonian world cannot persist without the other.[18] [18]Ibid., 74-5, 132.

Doric civilization, the hard Apollonian spine of western culture, vaunting the defiant erectness of its architecture, is fundamentally defensive in nature. Already in this, Nietzsche's most 'Schopenhauerian' book, the minor register of the pessimistic quandary prevails without compromise; the overcoming of wretched individuality is to be referred in the direction of the reservoir of insurgent desire, not in that of a metaphysical renunciation. One does not build fortifications against saints:

to me the Doric state and Doric art are explicable only as a permanent military encampment of the Apollonian. Only incessant resistance to the titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysian could account for the long survival of an art so defiantly prim and so encompassed with bulwarks, a training so warlike and rigorous, and a political structure so cruel and relentless.[19] [19]F. Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Materialien, 1981), 35 tr. W. Kaufmann as *The Birth of Tragedy* (NY: Vintage, 1967), 47.

The difference between Dionysus and Apollo is that between music and the plastic arts (Schopenhauer's differentiation that Nietzsche describes as 'the most important insight of aesthetics'),[20] [20]Ibid., 89; 100. will and representation (primary and secondary process), chaos and form. In the tragic fusion of music and theatrical spectacle desire is delivered upon the order of representation in a delirious collective affirmation of insurgent alterity (nature, impulse, oracular insight, woman, barbarism, Asia). Greek tragedy is the last instance of the occident being radically permeable to its outside. The Socratic death of tragedy is the beginning of the ethnic solipsism and imperialistic dogmatism that has characterized western politics ever since, the brutal domestication process with which the repressive instance in *man* ('reason') has afflicted the impersonal insurrectionary energies of creativity, until they became the whimpering, sentimental, and psychologized 'genius' of the romantics. With Socrates began the passionate quest of European humanity to become the *ugly animal*.

In his later, more fragmentary writings on art, Nietzsche perhaps says something a little like the following. The aesthetic *operation* is simplification; the movement of abstraction, logicization, unification, the resolution of problematic. It is this operation which, when understood in terms of the logical principles formulated by Aristotle – in terms, that is, of its own product – seems like a negation of the enigmatic, the re-distribution of alterity to the same within a zero-sum exchange, the progressive 'improvement' and domestication of life. But simplification is not a teleologically regulated approximation to simplicity, to the decadent terminus we call 'truth', it is an inexhaustibly open-ended creative process whose only limits are fictions fabricated out of itself. Nothing is more complex than simplification; what art takes from enigma it more than replenishes in the instantiation of itself, in the labyrinthine puzzle it plants in history. The intensification of enigma. The luxuriantly problematic loam of existence is built out of the sedimented aeons of residues deposited by the will to power, the impulse to create, 'The world as a work of art that gives birth to itself.'[21] [21]F. Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*, ed. P. Gast, E. Förster-Nietzsche (Stuttgart: Alfred KrönerVerlag, 1964), 533; tr. by W. Kaufmann as *The Will to Power* (NY: Vintage, 1968), 419.

Enigma, positive confusion (delirium), problematic, pain, whatever we want to call it; the torment of the philosophers in any case, is the stimulus to ecstatic creation, to an interminable 'resolution' into the enhanced provocations of art. What the philosophers have never understood is this: it is the *unintelligibility if the world alone that gives it worth*. 'Inertia needs unity (monism); plurality of interpretations a sign of strength. Not to desire to deprive the world of its disturbing and enigmatic character'.[22] [22]Ibid., 413; 326. Not, then, to oppose pain to the absence o f pain as metaphysical pessimism does, but, rather, to differentiate the ecstatic overcoming of pain from weariness and inertia, to exult in new and more terrible agonies, fears, burning perplexities as resource of becoming, overcoming, triumph, the great libidinal oscillations that break up stabilized systems and intoxicate on intensity; that is Dionysian pessimism – 'refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic';[23] [23]Ibid., 330; 262. 'the effect of the work of art is to *excite the state that creates art – intoxication*'.[24] [24]Ibid., 553; 434.

IV

After Nietzsche there is Freud. Tapping into a reservoir of genius (the unconscious of late nineteenth-century Viennese women) that drives him to the point of idiocy, he pushes onwards without knowing what the fuck he's doing Freud is a thinker of astounding richness and fertile complexity, but I shall merely touch upon his most disastrous

confusion When he writes on art, degenerating – despite his wealth of acuity – into banal psycho-biography, a terribly damaging loss of direction afflicts the psychoanalytic enterprise. The connection between the irruptive primary process and artistic creativity, or the basic inextricability of psychoanalysis and aesthetics, slips Freud's grasp, and art is presented as a merely contingent terrain for the application of therapeutically honed concepts. The adaptation of the mutilated individual to its society, in which art is illegal except as a parasite of elite commodity production circuits, is the scandal of psychoanalysis. It becomes Kantian (bourgeois); a delicate police activity dedicated to the social management and containment of genius. As if 'therapy' could be anything other than the revolutionary unleashing of artistic creation!

The two basic directions in which the philosophy of genius can develop are exemplified by psychoanalysis and national socialism. Either rigorous anti-anthropomorphism, the steady constriction of the terrain of intentional explanation, and the rolling reduction of praxes to parapraxes, or the re-ascription of genius to intentional individuality, concentration of decision, and the paranoiac praxial interpretation of non-intentional processes (the Jewish conspiracy theory). The death of God is operative in both cases, either as the space of the generative unconscious, or as that of a triumphantly divinized and arbitrarily isolated secular subjectivity. It is easy to see that the role of discourse in these two cases is a very precise register for the difference at issue; on the one hand the talking cure, in which the texts of confession and rational theory are both displaced by the compression wave of a radically senseless energy process that defies the status of object in relation to an autonomously determinable agent language; and on the other, the interminable authoritative monologue of the dictator (politically instantiated ego-ideal), in which the will is returned to a quasi-Kantian acceptation to capitalize upon its libidinal detour, finding its true sense in the lucid decision of an individual who speaks on behalf of a racially specified unconscious clamour.

That part of twentieth-century philosophy resonant with the aesthetically oriented tendency outlined here has as its two great tasks the diagnosis of Nazism and protraction of the psychoanalytic impulse, in other words the arming of desire with intellectual weapons that will allow it to evade the dead-end racist *Götterdammerung* politics which capital deploys as a last ditch defence against the flood. No revolution without insurrectionary desire, no effective route for insurrectionary desire without integral anti-fascism. Wilhelm Reich, Georges Bataille, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari are perhaps the most important theoretical *loci* in this development. The latter three I

shall say a little about.

It is not *simply* ridiculous to describe Bataille as Schopenhauer with in so far as this might crudely characterize a certain variant of 'Nietzscheanism', or Dionysian pessimism. After all, Bataille too is concerned with value as the annihilation of life, challenging the utilitarianism that finds its only end in the preservation and expansion of existence. If this affirmation of loss is 'nihilistic', it is at least an 'active nihilism'; the promotion of a violently convulsive *expenditure* rather than a weary renunciation. Art as the wastage of life. And Bataille's involvement with art, above all with literature, is of an unparalleled intricacy and intensity. Philosopher and historian of art, literary theorist, in his 'philosophy' a stylist, dazzling as an essayist, a novelist and poet of both profundity and incandescent beauty, his is a writing oblivious to circumscription, spreading like an exotic fungus into the darkest recesses of aesthetic possibility. A rather tortured and incoherent leap? Come on now! A 'philosophy' of excess that draws out an inner connection between literature, eroticism, and revolt could hardly be irrelevant to our problematic here. As Bataille states, 'beauty alone . . . renders tolerable a need for disorder, violence, and indignity that is the root of love.'[25] [25] G. Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 13.

Bataille also has the peculiar honour, shared with Nietzsche and Reich, of beginning his assault on germinal national socialism before Hitler had exhibited its truth. His early essays sketch a vision of fascism as the most fanatical project for the elimination of excess, an attempt at the secular enforcement of the perfectly ordered city of God against the disorder, luxuriance, and mess of surplus production, as it sprawls into the voluptuary expenditure of eroticism and art. Assailing the fascist tendency is the disindividualized delirium of tragic sacrifice and revolution, when

Being is given to us in an intolerable surpassing of being, no less intolerable than death. And because, in death, it is withdrawn from us at the same time it is given, we must search for it in the feeling of death, in those intolerable moments where it seems that we are dying, because the being in us is only there through excess, when the plenitude of horror and that of joy coincide.[26] [26] Ibid., 11-12.

For there is no doubt that the fascists are right, the very incarnation of right, yes: 'Literature is even, like the of moral law, a danger.'[27] [27] Ibid., vol. IX, 182.

A theory of the real as art (primary production) that is melded

seamlessly with an anti-fascist diagnostics characterizes the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In their *Anti-Oedipus* they indicate that the rational regulation or coding of creative process is derivative, sterile, and eliminable. Their name for genius is 'schizophrenia', a term that cannot be safely domesticated within psychology, any more than 'genius' can (and for the same reasons). If nature is psychotic it is simply because our psychoses are not in reality 'ours'.

Libido – as the raw energy of creation – is ungrounded, irreducibly multiple, yet it precipitates a real and unified 'principle' out of itself. The body without organs is its name; at once material abstraction, and the concretely hypostasized differential terrain which is nothing other than what is instantaneously shared by difference. The body without organs is pure surface, because it is the mere coherence of differential web, but it is also the source of depth, since it is the sole 'ontological' element of difference. It is produced transcendence. Paradox after paradox, spun like a disintegrating bandage upon the infected and deteriorating wound of Kant's aesthetics, teasing the philosophical domestication of art – the most gangrenous cultural appendage of capital – towards its utter disintegration.

How does desire come to desire its own repression? How does production come to rigidify itself in the social straitjacket *whose most dissolved form is capital*? It is with this problematic, inherited from Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Reich, that Deleuze and Guattari orient their work. In our terms here: how does art become (under-) compensated labour? Their answer involves a displacement of the problem into a philosophical affinity with Kant's paralogisms of the pure understanding, rethought in *Anti-Oedipus* as materially instantiated traps for desire. A paralogism is the attempt to ground 'conditions of possibility' in the objectivity they permit, or creativity in what it creates. This is, to take the most pertinent example, to derive the forces of production from the socio-economic apparatus they generate. Sociological fundamentalism, state worship, totalitarian paranoia and fascism, they all exhibit the same basic impulse; hatred of art, (real) freedom, desire, everything that cannot be controlled, regulated, and administered. Fascism hates aliens, migrant workers, the homeless, rootless people of every kind and inclination, everything evocative of excitement and uncertainty, women, artists, lunatics, drifting sexual drives, liquids, impurity, and abandonment.

Philosophy, in its longing to rationalize, formalize, define, delimit, to terminate enigma and uncertainty, to co-operate wholeheartedly with the police, is nihilistic in the ultimate sense that it strives for the immobile perfection of death. But creativity cannot be brought to an

end that is compatible with power, for unless life is extinguished, control must inevitably break down. We possess art lest *we perish of the truth*.[28] [28]Nietzsche, *Der Wille Jur Macht*, 554; 435.

To conclude is not merely erroneous, but ugly.

The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism (Excerpt)

This is a short excerpt from the book The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism, taken from chapter 7: Fanged Noumenon (passion of the cyclone). The book was published in 1992 by Routledge.

Bataille 'interrupts' [V 29] *Inner Experience* in order to make a few pages of remarks about Hinduism, in a section which ends with a technical argument designed to reinforce his claim to be no more interested in liberation from rebirth than in any other type of salvation. He compares the asceticism of Hinduism to that of Christianity, distancing himself from both in the name of excess, and pretends to no affinity with 'the naïvety— the purity—of the Hindu' [V 30]. Perhaps most important of all is the affirmation of mess and inadequacy implicit in the words: 'I do not doubt that the Hindus go far into the impossible, but *to the highest degree* they lack that which matters to me; the faculty of expression' [V 31]. It is because he is a writer that Bataille disdains to be a mystic. In what he understands of the Hindu religion—and he lays claim to no intimate knowledge of it —there is one tenet alone to which he unconditionally subscribes: '[o]nly intensity matters' [V 29].

Inner experience translates mysticism into a vagrant vocabulary at the scurf-edge of tradition. As the initial gesture of a *Summa Atheologica*, it begins amongst the ruins of God. Echoing Céline—that other wretched tramp of nihilism—he calls experience 'a voyage to the end of the possible of man' [V 19], and thinks interiority not as the secret recess of the self, but as a plane of contact and contagion. The core of inner experience is not personal identity, but naked intensity, denuded even of oneself, and jutting from the refuse of Christian dogmatics as a broken lurch into the unknown. He insists: 'inner experience is ecstasy' whilst 'ecstasy is...communication, opposing itself to the subsidence onto oneself' [V 24].

It is the order of the object that organizes inner experience as private reverie, and as a detachment from relation. Above all it is the God of monotheism—the supreme or absolute being—which reproduces the prison of individuation at the scale of the cosmos. This is why the ecstasy of the unknown, which gnaws away the last landmarks from Bataille's voyage, contests any possible resurrection of theological edifices. As he remarks:

'I hold the apprehension of God, even when formless and without mode...for an arrest of the movement which carries us to the more obscure apprehension of the *unknown*...[V 17].'

An utter intoxication such as this is quite different from its Kantian anticipation, although Kant too contests the right of dogmatic theology to guide his journey:

Nothing but the sobriety of a critique, at once strict and just, can free us from this dogmatic delusion, which through the lure of an imagined felicity keeps so many in bondage to theories and systems. Such a critique confines all our speculative claims rigidly to the field of possible experience; and it does this not by shallow scoffing at ever-repeated failures or pious sighs over the limits of our reason, but by an effective determining of these limits in accordance with established principles, inscribing *nihil ulterius* on those Pillars of Hercules which nature herself has erected in order that the voyage of our reason may be extended no further than the continuous coastline of experience itself reaches—a coast we cannot leave without venturing upon a shoreless ocean which, after alluring us with ever-deceptive prospects, compels us in the end to abandon as hopeless all this vexatious and tedious endeavour [K IV 392-3].

For Kant it is not enough to have reached the ocean, the shoreless expanse, the *nihil ulterius* as positive zero. He recognizes the ocean as a space of absolute voyage, and thus of hopelessness and waste. Only another shore would redeem it for him, and that is nowhere to be found. Better to remain on dry land than to lose oneself in the desolation of zero. It is for this reason that he says the 'concept of a noumenon is...a merely *limiting concept*' [K IV 282].

In this way the Occidental obsession with the object consummates itself in the blind passivity of its nihilism. Beyond experience, it is suggested, there must be thought 'an unknown something' [K III 283], although 'we are unable to comprehend how such noumena can be possible' [K III 281]. More precisely:

[The noumenon]...is not indeed in any way positive, and is not a determinate knowledge of anything, but signifies only the thought of something in general, in which I abstract from everything that belongs to the form of sensible intuition [KIII 281].

That no transcendent object is found is an event which retains the sense of a lost or absent object, rather than that of a contact with or through objectlessness. The ocean has no sense except as a failure of

the land. Even whilst supposedly knowing nothing of the noumenon, which, we are told, has 'no assignable meaning' [K III 303], one somehow still knows that it would be something other than objectless waste without end, or the void-plane touched upon at zero-intensity. Kant is peculiarly adamant in this respect:

[W]e cannot think of any way in which such intelligible objects might be given. The problematic thought which leaves open a place for them serves only, like an empty space, for the limitation of empirical principles, without itself containing or revealing any other object of knowledge beyond the sphere of those principles [K III 285].

The noumenon is the absence of the subject, and is thus inaccessible in principle to experience. If there is still a so-called 'noumenal subject' in the opening phase of the critical enterprise it is only because a residue of theological reasoning conceives a stratum of the self which is invulnerable to transition, or synonymous with time as such. This is the 'real' or 'deep' subject, the self or soul, a subject that sloughs-off its empirical instantiation without impairment, the immortal subject of mortality. It only remains for Hegel to rigorously identify this subject with death, with the death necessitated by the allergy of *Geist* to its finitude, to attain a conception of deaths *for itself*. But this is all still the absence of the subject, even when 'of' is translated into the subjective genitive, and at zero none of it makes any difference.

With Kant death finds its theoretical formulation and utilitarian frame as a quasi- objectivity correlative to capital, and *noumenon* is its name. The effective flotation of this term in philosophy coincided with the emergence of a social order built upon a profound rationalization of excess, or rigorous circumscription of voluptuous lethality. Once enlightenment rationalism begins its dominion ever fewer corpses are left hanging around in public places with each passing year, ever fewer skulls are used as paperweights, and ever fewer paupers perish undisturbed on the streets. Even the graveyards are rationalized and tidied up. It is not surprising, therefore, that with Kant thanatology undergoes the most massive reconstruction in its history. The clerical vultures are purged, or marginalized. Death is no longer to be culturally circulated, injecting a transcendent reference into production, and ensuring superterrestrial interests their rights. Instead death is privatized, withdrawn into interiority, to flicker at the edge of the contract as a narcissistic anxiety without public accreditation. Compared to the immortal soul of capital the death of the individual becomes an empirical triviality, a mere re-allocation of stock.

In the *Analytic of the Sublime* in his Third Critique Kant tentatively raises the possibility that we might taste death—even if only through a 'negative pleasure'—but nowhere does he raise the possibility that death might savage us. Even when positivized as noumenon, death remains locked in the chain of connotations that passes through matter, inertia, femininity, and castration, resting in its pacified theistic sense as toothless resource and malleable clay. There is no place, no domain, for base matter in Kant's thinking, since even auto-generativity in nature is conceived as a regulative analogue of rational willing. One must first unleash the noumenon from its determination as problematic object in order to glimpse that between matter and death there is both a certain identity and an intricate relation, or, in other words: a unilateral difference appending matter to the edge of zero. Not that this complicity has anything to do with the inertia crucial to the mathematical idealization of matter, or with any other kind of mechanical sterility. Matter is no more simply dead than it is *simply* anything else, because simplicity is the operator of the transcendent disjunction between subject and object which effaces base materiality. The death 'proper' to matter is the jagged edge of its impropriety, its teeth.

If death can bite it is not because it retains some fragment of a potency supposedly proper to the object, but because it remains uncaged by the inhibition objectivity entails. Death alone is utterly on the loose, howling as the dark motor of storms and epidemics. After the ruthless abstraction of all life the blank savagery of real time remains, for it is the reality of abstraction itself that is time: the desert, death, and desolator of all things. Bataille writes of 'the ceaseless slippage of everything into nothing. If one wants, time' [V 137], and thinks of himself as 'a tooth of TIME' [I 558]. It could also be said—in a more Nietzschean vein—that zero-becoming has its metaphor in a bird of prey, for which every object is a lamb.

Repression always fails, but nowhere is there a more florid example of such failure than the attempt to bury death quietly on the outskirts of the city and get down to business. Only the encrusted historical superficies of zero are trapped in the clay, distilling death down to its ultimate liquidity, and maximizing its powers of infiltration. Marx notes this filtration process in *Capital*, where he remarks about money/death that it 'does not vanish on dropping out of the circuit of the metamorphosis of a given commodity. It is constantly being precipitated into new places in the arena of circulation vacated by other commodities' [Cap 114]. Dead labour is far harder to control than the live stuff was, which is why the enlightenment project of interring gothic superstition was the royal

road to the first truly vampiric civilization, in which death alone comes to rule.

Critique of Transcendental Miserablism

This essay was first published on hyperstition.abstractdynamics.org on 2007-01-15.

This post at K-Punk epitomizes a gathering trend among neomarxists to finally bury all aspiration to positive economism ('freeing the forces of production from capitalist relations of production') and install a limitless cosmic despair in its place. Who still remembers Khruschev's threat to the semi-capitalist West – "we'll bury you." Or Mao's promise that the Great Leap Forward would ensure the Chinese economy leapt past that of the UK within 15 years? The Frankfurtian spirit now rules: Admit that capitalism will outperform its competitors under almost any imaginable circumstances, while turning that very admission into a new kind of curse ("we never wanted growth anyway, it just spells alienation, besides, haven't you heard that the polar bears are drowning …?").

From Baudelaire's *Le Voyage*, with its mournful discovery that human vice repeated itself universally in even the most exotic locations, to the left-wing reading of Philip K Dick as a Gnostic denunciation of commercialized change, capitalistic variety and innovation has been totalized as difference without essential difference, just more of the same senseless dissimilarity. The grand master of this move is Arthur Schopenhauer, who lent it explicit philosophical rigour as a mode of transcendental apprehension. Since time is the source of our distress — PKD's "Black Iron Prison" – how can any kind of evolution be expected to save us? Thus Transcendental Miserablism constitutes itself as an impregnable mode of negation. It goes without saying that no substantial residue of Marxian historicism remains in the "communist" version of this posture. In fact, with economics and history comprehensively abandoned, all that survives of Marx is a psychological bundle of resentments and disgruntlements, reducible to the word 'capitalism' in its vague and negative employment: as the name for everything that hurts, taunts and disappoints.

For the Transcendental Miserablist, 'Capitalism' is the suffering of desire turned to ruin, the name for everything that might be wanted in time, an intolerable tantalization whose ultimate nature is unmasked by the Gnostic visionary as loss, decrepitude and death, and in truth, it is not unreasonable that capitalism should become the object of this resentful denigration. Without attachment to anything beyond its own abysmal exuberance, capitalism identifies itself with desire to a degree

that cannot imaginably be exceeded, shamelessly soliciting any impulse that might contribute an increment of economizable drive to its continuously multiplying productive initiatives. Whatever you want, capitalism is the most reliable way to get it, and by absorbing every source of social dynamism, capitalism makes growth, change and even time itself into integral components of its endlessly gathering tide.

"Go for growth" now means "Go (hard) for capitalism." It is increasingly hard to remember that this equation would once have seemed controversial. On the left it would once have been dismissed as risible. This is the new world Transcendental Miserablism haunts as a dyspeptic ghost.

Perhaps there will always be a fashionable anticapitalism, but each will become unfashionable, while capitalism – becoming ever more tightly identified with its own self-surpassing – will always, inevitably, be the latest thing. 'Means' and 'relations' of production have simultaneously emulsified into competitive decentralized networks under numerical control, rendering palaeomarxist hopes of extracting a postcapitalist future from the capitalism machine overtly unimaginable. The machines have sophisticated themselves beyond the possibility of socialist utility, incarnating market mechanics within their nano-assembled interstices and evolving themselves by quasi-darwinian alogorithms that build hypercompetition into 'the infrastructure'. It is no longer just society, but time itself, that has taken the 'capitalist road'.

Hence the Transcendental Miserablist syllogism: *Time is on the side of capitalism, capitalism is everything that makes me sad, so time must be evil.*

The polar bears are drowning, and there's nothing at all we can do about it.

Capitalism is still accelerating, even though it has already realized novelties beyond any previous human imagining. After all, what is human imagination? It is a relatively paltry thing, merely a sub-product of the neural activity of a species of terrestrial primate. Capitalism, in contrast, has no external limit, it has consumed life and biological intelligence to create a new life and a new plane of intelligence, vast beyond human anticipation. The Transcendental Miserablist has an inalienable right to be bored, of course. *Call this new? It's still nothing but change*.

What Transcendental Miserablism has no right to is the pretence of a positive thesis. The Marxist dream of dynamism without competition was merely a dream, an old monotheistic dream re-stated, the wolf lying down with the lamb. If such a dream counts as ‘imagination’, then imagination is no more than a defect of the species: the packaging of tawdry contradictions as utopian fantasies, to be turned against reality in the service of sterile negativity. ‘Post-capitalism’ has no real meaning except an end to the engine of change.

Life continues, and capitalism does life in a way it has never been done before. If that doesn’t count as ‘new’, then the word ‘new’ has been stripped down to a hollow denunciation. It needs to be re-allocated to the sole thing that knows how to use it effectively, to the Shoggoth-summoning regenerative anomalization of fate, to the runaway becoming of such infinite plasticity that nature warps and dissolves before it. To The Thing. To Capitalism. And if that makes Transcendental Miserablists unhappy, the simple truth of the matter is: Anything would.

Part IV
Neoreaction

The Problem of Democracy

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2014-08-09.

Recent discussions (on Twitter, primarily) have convinced me of the need for a 'Neocameralism for Dummies' post, providing a succinct introduction to this genre of political theory. The importance of this is obvious if Neocameralism is conceived as the central, and defining pillar of Neoreaction. In preparation for this task, however, it is necessary to revisit the socio-historical diagnosis from which Neocameralism emerged (in the work, of course, of Mencius Moldbug). That requires a brief prolegomenon addressing the NRx critique of democracy, focusing initially on its negative aspect. Neocameralism is introduced as a proposed solution to a problem. First, the problem.

Government is complicated. If this thesis seems implausible to you, it is probable that you will have great difficulties with everything to follow. It would take another (and quite different) post to address objections to this entire topic of discussion which take the approximate form "Government is easy, you just find the best man and put him in charge!" All social problems are easy if you can 'just' do the right thing. Infantile recommendations will always be with us.

There are two general lines of democratic apologetics. The first, and politically by far the strongest, is essentially religious. It too is best addressed by a post of its own, themed by Moldbug's 'Ultra-Calvinist Hypothesis'. For our purposes here we need only suggest that it is quite satisfactorily represented by Jacques Rousseau, and that its fundamental principal is popular sovereignty. From the NRx perspective, it is merely depraved. Only civilizational calamities can come from it.

The second line of apology is far more serious, theoretically engaging, and politically irrelevant. It understands democracy as a mechanism, tasked with the solemn responsibility of *controlling government*. Any effective control mechanism works by governing behavior under the influence of feedback from actual performance. In biology, this is achieved by natural selection upon phenotypes. In science, it is achieved by the experimental testing of theory, supported by a culture of open criticism. In capitalist economics, it is achieved by market evaluation of products and services, providing feedback on

business performance. According to systems-theoretical defenses of democracy, it works by sensitizing government to feedback from voters, who act as conductors of information from actual administrative performance. This is the sophisticated liberal theory of democracy. It explains why science, markets, and democracy are often grouped together within liberal ideologies. (Bio-Darwinism, naturally, is more safely neglected).

How could this beautiful political design possibly go wrong? Merely by asking this question, you have set out on the Neoreactionary path.

Moldbug's answer, and ours, begins by agreeing with the sophisticated liberal theory in its most abstract outlines. Democracy is indeed a system for the functional tuning of government, operating through electoral feedback, and predictably enhancing its specialized competence, as all reiterating experimentation-selection mechanisms do. Democratic political machines become increasingly good at what they do. The problem, however, is that their functional specialism is not at all identical with administrative capability. Rather, as they progressively learn, the feedback they receive trains them in *mastery of public opinion*.

The long-circuit, assumed by liberal political theory, models the electorate as a reality-sensor, aggregating information about the effects of government policy, and relaying it back through opinion polls and elections, to select substitutable political regimes (organized as parties) that have demonstrated their effectiveness at optimizing social outcomes. The short-circuit, proposed by Moldbug, models the electorate as an object of indoctrination, subjected to an ever-more advanced process of opinion-formation through a self-organized, message-disciplined educational and media apparatus. The political party best adapted to this apparatus — called the 'inner party' by Moldbug — will dominate the democratic process. The outer party serves the formal cybernetic function demanded by liberal theory, by providing an electoral option, but it will achieve practical success only by accommodating itself to the apparatus of opinion-formation — perhaps modifying its recommendations in minor, and ultimately inconsequential ways. It is the system of opinion-formation (the 'Cathedral') that represents true sovereign authority within the democratic system, since it is the 'reality principle' which decides success or failure. The monotonic trend to short-circuit dominance is the degenerative process inherent to democracy.

If you want the government to listen to you, *then you have to expect*

it to tell you what to say. That is the principal lesson of 'progressive' political history. The assertion of popular voice has led, by retrospective inevitability, to a specialized, super-competent political devotion to ventriloquism. The disaster, therefore, is two-fold. On the one hand, government competence in its primary responsibility — efficient governance — is systematically eroded, to be replaced by a facility at propaganda (in a process akin to the accumulation of junk DNA). As government is swallowed by messaging, residual administrative competences are maintained by a bureaucratic machine or 'permanent government', largely insulated from the increasingly senseless signals of democratic opinion, but still assimilated to the opinion-formation establishment by direct (extra-democratic) processes of cultivation. Lacking feedback from anything but its own experiments in mind-control, quality of government collapses.

Secondly, and even more calamitously from certain perspectives, culture is devastated by the politicization of opinion. Under a political dispensation in which opinion has no formal power, it is broadly free to develop in accordance with its own experiences, concerns, and curiosities. In a significant minority of cases, cultural achievements of enduring value result. Only in cases of extreme, provocative dissent will the government have any interest in what the people think. Once politicized, however, correct public opinion is a matter of central — indeed all-consuming — government attention. Ideologically installed as the foundation of political legitimacy, it becomes the supreme object of political manipulation. Any thought is now dissent if it is not positively aligned with society's leading political direction. To think outside the Cathedral is to attack the government. Culture is destroyed.

To be a Neoreactionary is to see these twin eventualities starkly manifested in contemporary Western civilization. What democracy has not yet ruined, it is ruining. It is essentially destructive of both government and culture. It cannot indefinitely last.

The subsequent question: What could conceivably provide a solution? That is where Neocameralism is introduced.

Re-Accelerationism

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Is there a word for an 'argument' so soggily insubstantial that it has to be scooped into a pair of scare-quotes to be apprehended, even in its self-dissolution? If there were, I'd have been using it all the time recently. Among the latest occasions is a blog post by Charlie Stross, which describes itself as "a political speculation" before disappearing into the gray goomenon. Nothing in it really holds together, but it's fun in its own way, especially if it's taken as a sign of something else.

The 'something else' is a subterranean complicity between Neoreaction and Accelerationism (the latter linked here, Stross-style, in its most recent, Leftist version). Communicating with fellow 'Hammer of Neoreaction' David Brin, Stross asks: "David, have you run across the left-wing equivalent of the Neo-Reactionaries — the Accelerationists?" He then continues, invitingly: "Here's my (tongue in cheek) take on both ideologies: Trotskyite singularitarians for Monarchism!"

Stross is a comic-future novelist, so it's unrealistic to expect much more than a dramatic diversion (or anything more at all, actually). After an entertaining meander through parts of the Trotskyite-neolibertarian social-graph, which could have been deposited on a time-like curve out of *Singularity Sky*, we've learnt that Britain's Revolutionary Communist Party has been on a strange path, but whatever connection there was to Accelerationism, let alone Neoreaction, has been entirely lost. Stross has the theatrical instinct to end the performance before it became too embarrassing: "Welcome to the century of the Trotskyite monarchists, the revolutionary reactionaries, and the fringe politics of the paradoxical!" (OK.) Curtain closes. Still, it was all comparatively good humored (at least in contrast to Brin's increasingly enraged head-banging).

Neoreaction is Accelerationism with a flat tire. Described less figuratively, it is the recognition that the acceleration trend is historically compensated. Beside the *speed machine*, or industrial capitalism, there is an ever more perfectly weighted decelerator, which gradually drains techno-economic momentum into its own expansion, as it returns dynamic process to meta-stasis. Comically, the

fabrication of this braking mechanism is proclaimed as *progress*. It is the Great Work of the Left. Neoreaction arises through naming it (without excessive affection) as *the Cathedral*.

Is the trap to be exploded (as advocated Accelerationism), or has the explosion been trapped (as diagnosed by Neoreaction)? — That is the cybernetic puzzle-house under investigation. Some quick-sketch background might be helpful.

The germinal catalyst for Accelerationism was a call in Deleuze & Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) to "accelerate the process". Working like termites within the rotting mansion of Marxism, which was systematically gutted of all Hegelianism until it became something utterly unrecognizable, D&G vehemently rejected the proposal that anything had ever "died of contradictions", or ever would. Capitalism was not born from a negation, nor would it perish from one. The death of capitalism could not be delivered by the executioner's ax of a vengeful proletariat, because the closest realizable approximations to 'the negative' were inhibitory, and stabilizing. Far from propelling 'the system' to its end, they slowed the dynamic to a simulacrum of systematicity, retarding its approach to an absolute limit. By progressively comatizing capitalism, anti-capitalism dragged it back into a self-conserving social structure, suppressing its eschatological implication. The only way Out was onward.

Marxism is the philosophical version of a Parisian accent, a rhetorical type, and in the case of D&G it becomes something akin to a higher sarcasm, mocking every significant tenet of the faith. The bibliography of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (of which *Anti-Oedipus* is the first volume) is a compendium of counter-Marxist theory, from drastic revisions (Braudel), through explicit critiques (Wittfogel), to contemptuous dismissals (Nietzsche). The D&G model of capitalism is not dialectical, but cybernetic, defined by a positive coupling of commercialization ("decoding") and industrialization ("Deterritorialization"), intrinsically tending to an extreme (or "absolute limit"). Capitalism is the singular historical installation of a social machine based upon cybernetic escalation (positive feedback), reproducing itself only incidentally, as an accident of continuous socio-industrial revolution. Nothing brought to bear *against* capitalism can compare to the intrinsic antagonism it directs towards its own actuality, as it speeds out of itself, hurtling to the end already operative 'within' it. (Of course, this is madness.)

A detailed appreciation of "Left Accelerationism" is a joke for another occasion. "Speaking on behalf of a dissident faction within the

modern braking mechanism, we'd really like to see things move forward a lot faster." *OK, perhaps we can work something out* … If this 'goes anywhere' it can only get more entertaining. (Stross is right about that.)

Neoreaction has far greater impetus, and associated diversity. If reduced to a spectrum, it includes a wing even more Leftist than the Left, since it critiques the Cathedral for failing to stop the craziness of Modernity with anything like sufficient vigor. *You let this monster off the leash and now you can't stop it* might be its characteristic accusation.

On the Outer Right (in this sense) is found a Neoreactionary *Re-Accelerationism*, which is to say: a critique of the decelerator, or of 'progressive' stagnation as an identifiable institutional development — the Cathedral. From this perspective, the Cathedral acquires its teleological definition from its emergent function as the cancellation of capitalism: what it has to become is the more-or-less precise negative of historical primary process, such that it composes — together with the ever more wide-flung society-in-liquidation it parasitizes — a metastatic cybernetic megasystem, or super-social trap. 'Progress' in its overt, mature, ideological incarnation is the anti-trend required to bring history to a halt. Conceive what is needed to prevent acceleration into techno-commercial Singularity, and the Cathedral is what it will be.

Self-organizing compensatory apparatuses — or negative feedback assemblies — develop erratically. They search for equilibrium through a typical behavior labeled 'hunting' — over-shooting adjustments and re-adjustments that produce distinctive wave-like patterns, ensuring the suppression of runaway dynamics, but producing volatility. Cathedral hunting behavior of sufficient crudity would be expected to generate occasions of 'Left Singularity' (with subsequent dynamic 'restorations') as inhibitory adjustment over-shoots into system crash (and re-boot). Even these extreme oscillations, however, are internal to the metastatic super-system they perturb, insofar as an overall gradient of Cathedralization persists. *Anticipating escape at the pessimal limit of the metastatic hunting cycle is a form of paleo-Marxist delusion*. The cage can only be broken on the way up.

For Re-Accelerationist Neoreaction, escape into uncompensated cybernetic runaway is the guiding objective — strictly equivalent to intelligence explosion, or techno-commercial Singularity. Everything else is a trap (by definitive, system-dynamic necessity). It might be that monarchs have some role to play in this, but it's by no means

obvious that they do.

Meta-Neocameralism

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2014-03-24.

First thing: "Meta-Neocameralism" isn't anything new, and it certainly isn't anything post-Moldbuggian. It's no more than Neocameralism apprehended in its most abstract features, through the coining of a provisional and dispensable term. (It allows for an acronym that doesn't lead to confusions with North Carolina, while encouraging quite different confusions, which I'm pretending not to notice.)

Locally (to this blog), the "meta-" is the mark of a prolegomenon[1] [1]I realize this doesn't work in Greek, but systematic before-after confusion is an *Outside in* thing. , to a disciplined discussion of Neocameralism which has later to take place. Its abstraction is introductory, in accordance with something that is yet to be re-started, or re-animated, in detail. (For existing detail, outside the Moldbug canon itself, look here.)

The excellent comment thread here provides at least a couple of crucial clues:

nydwracu (23/03/2014 at 6:47 pm): *Neocameralism doesn't answer questions like that [on the specifics of social organization]; instead, it's a mechanism for answering questions like that. … You can ask, "is Coke considered better than RC Cola?", or you can institute capitalism and find out. You can ask, "are ethno-nationalist states considered better than mixed states?", or you can institute the patchwork and find out. …*

RiverC (23/03/2014 at 3:44 am): *Neo-cameralism is, if viewed in this light, a 'political system system', it is not a political system but a system for implementing political systems. Of course the same guy who came up with it also invented an operating system (a system for implementing software systems.)*

MNC, then, is not a political prescription, for instance a social ideal aligned with techno-commercialist preferences. It is an intellectual framework for examining systems of governance, *theoretically* formalized as disposals of sovereign property. The *social* formalization of such systems, which Moldbug *also* advocates, can be parenthesized within MNC. We are not at this stage considering the model of a desirable social order, but rather the abstract model of social order in general, apprehended radically — at the root — where 'to rule' and 'to own' lack distinct meanings. Sovereign property is 'sovereign' and

'primary' because it is not merely a claim, but *effective possession*. (There is much more to come in later posts on the concept of sovereign property, some preliminary musings here.)

Because MNC is an extremely powerful piece of cognitive technology, capable of tackling problems at a number of distinct levels (in principle, an unlimited number), it is clarified through segmentation into an abstraction cascade. Descending through these levels adds concreteness, and tilts incrementally towards normative judgements (framed by the hypothetical imperative of *effective government*, as defined within the cascade).

(1) The highest level of practical significance (since MNC-theology need not delay us) has already been touched upon. It applies to social regimes of every conceivable type, assuming only that a systematic mode of sovereign property reproduction will essentially characterize each. Power is *economic* irrespective of its relation to modern conventions of commercial transaction, because it involves the disposal of a real (if obscure) quantity, which is subject to increase or decrease over the cyclic course of its deployment. Population, territory, technology, commerce, ideology, and innumerable additional heterogeneous factors are components of sovereign property (power), but their economic character is assured by the possibility — and indeed necessity — of more-or-less explicit trade-offs and cost-benefit calculations, suggesting an original (if germinal) fungibility, which is merely arithmetical coherence. This is presupposed by any estimation of growth or decay, success or failure, strengthening or weakening, of the kind required not only by historical analysis, but also by even the most elementary administrative competence. Without an implicit economy of power, no discrimination could be made between improvement and deterioration, and no directed action toward the former could be possible.

The effective cyclic reproduction of power has an external criterion — survival. It is not open to any society or regime to decide for itself what works. Its inherent understanding of its own economics of power is a complex measurement, gauging a relation to the outside, whose consequences are life and death. Built into the idea of sovereign property from the start, therefore, is an *accommodation to reality*. Foundational to MNC, at the very highest level of analysis, is the insight that *power is checked primordially*. On the Outside are wolves, serving as the scourge of Gnon. Even the greatest of all imaginable God-Kings — awesome Fnargl included — has ultimately to discover consequences, rather than inventing them. There is no principle more

important than this.

Entropy will be dissipated, idiocy will be punished, the weak will die. If the regime refuses to bow to this Law, the wolves will enforce it. Social Darwinism is not a choice societies get to make, but a system of real consequences that envelops them. MNC is articulated at the level — which cannot be transcended — where realism is mandatory for any social order. Those unable to create it, through effective government, will nevertheless receive it, in the harsh storms of Nemesis. Order is not defined within itself, but by the Law of the Outside.

At this highest level of abstraction, therefore, when MNC is asked "which type of regimes do you believe in?" the sole appropriate response is "those compatible with reality." Every society known to history — and others beside — had a working economy of power, at least for a while. Nothing more is required than this for MNC to take them as objects of disciplined investigation.

(2) Knowing that realism is not an optional regime value, we are able to proceed down the MNC cascade with the introduction of a second assumption: Civilizations will seek gentler teachers than the wolves. If it is possible to acquire some understanding of collapse, it will be preferred to the experience of collapse (once the wolves have culled the ineducable from history).

Everything survivable is potentially educational, even a mauling by the wolves. MNC however, as its name suggests, has reason to be especially attentive to the most abstract lesson of the Outside — the (logical) priority of *meta-learning*. It is good to discover reality, before — or at least not much later than — reality discovers us. Enduring civilizations do not merely know things, they know that it is important to know things, and to absorb realistic information. Regimes — disposing of sovereign property — have a special responsibility to instantiate this deutero-culture of learning-to-learn, which is required for intelligent government. This is a responsibility they take upon themselves because it is demanded by the Outside (and even in its refinement, it still smells of wolf).

Power is under such compulsion to learn about itself that recursion, or intellectualization, can be assumed. Power is selected to check itself, which it cannot do without an increase in formalization, and this is a matter — as we shall see — of immense consequence. Of necessity, it learns-to-learn (or dies), but this lesson introduces a critical tragic factor.

The tragedy of power is broadly coincident with modernity. It is not a simple topic, and from the beginning two elements in particular require explicit attention. Firstly, it encounters the terrifying (second-order) truth that practical learning is irreducibly experimental. In going 'meta' knowledge becomes scientific, which means that failure cannot be precluded through deduction, but has to be incorporated into the machinery of learning itself. Nothing that cannot go wrong is capable of teaching anything (even the accumulation of logical and mathematical truths requires cognitive trial-and-error, ventures into dead-ends, and the pursuit of misleading intuitions). Secondly, in becoming increasingly formalized, and ever more fungible, the disposal of sovereign power attains heightened liquidity. It is now possible for power to trade itself away, and an explosion of social bargaining results. Power can be exchanged for ('mere') wealth, or for social peace, or channeled into unprecedented forms of radical regime philanthropy / religious sacrifice. Combine these two elements, and it is clear that regimes enter modernity 'empowered' by new capabilities for experimental auto-dissolution. Trade authority away to the masses in exchange for promises of good behavior? Why not give it a try?

Cascade Stage-2 MNC thus (realistically) assumes a world in which power has become an art of experimentation, characterized by unprecedented calamities on a colossal scale, while the economy of power and the techno-commercial economy have been radically de-segmented, producing a single, uneven, but incrementally smoothed system of exchangeable social value, rippling ever outward, without firm limit. Socio-political organization, and corporate organization, are still distinguished by markers of traditional status, but no longer strictly differentiable by essential function.

The modern business of government is not 'merely' business only because it remains poorly formalized. As the preceding discussion suggests, this indicates that economic integration can be expected to deepen, as the formalization of power proceeds. (Moldbug seeks to accelerate this process.) An inertial assumption of distinct 'public' and 'private' spheres is quickly disturbed by thickening networks of exchange, swapping managerial procedures and personnel, funding political ambitions, expending political resources in commercial lobbying efforts, trading economic assets for political favors (denominated in votes), and in general consolidating a vast, highly-liquid reservoir of amphibiously 'corporacratic' value, indeterminable between 'wealth' and 'authority'. Wealth-power inter-convertibility is a reliable index of political modernity.

MNC does not *decide* that government *should* become a business. It

recognizes that government *has* become a business (dealing in fungible quantities). However, unlike private business ventures, which dissipate entropy through bankruptcy and market-driven restructuring, governments are reliably the worst run businesses in their respective societies, functionally crippled by defective, structurally-dishonest organizational models, exemplified most prominently by the democratic principle: *government is a business that should be run by its customers* (but actually can't be). Everything in this model that isn't a lie is a mistake.

At the second (descending) level of abstraction, then, MNC is still not recommending anything except theoretical clarity. It proposes:
a) Power is destined to arrive at experimental learning processes
b) As it learns, it formalizes itself, and becomes more fungible
c) Experiments in fungible power are vulnerable to disastrous mistakes
d) Such mistakes have in fact occurred, in a near-total way
e) For deep historical reasons, techno-commercial business organization emerges as the preeminent template for government entities, as for any composite economic agent. It is in terms of this template that modern political dysfunction can be rendered (formally) intelligible.

(3) Take the MNC abstraction elevator down another level, and it's still more of an analytic tool than a social prescription. (That's a good thing, *really*.) It tells us that every government, both extant and potential, is most accessible to rigorous investigation when apprehended as a *sovereign corporation*. This approach alone is able to draw upon the full panoply of theoretical resources, ancient and modern, because only in this way is power tracked in the same way it has actually developed (in tight alignment with a still-incomplete trend).

The most obvious objections are, *sensu stricto*, romantic. They take a predictable (which is not to say a casually dismissible) form. Government — if perhaps only lost or yet-unrealized government — is associated with 'higher' values than those judged commensurable with the techno-commercial economy, which thus sets the basis for a critique of the MNC 'business ontology' of governance as an illegitimate intellectual reduction, and ethical vulgarization. To quantify authority as power is already suspect. To project its incremental liquidation into a general economy, where leadership integrates — ever more seamlessly — with the price system, appears as an abominable symptom of modernist nihilism.

Loyalty (or the intricately-related concept of *asabiyyah*) serves as

one exemplary redoubt of the romantic cause. Is it not repulsive, even to entertain the possibility that loyalty might have a price? Handle addresses this directly in the comment thread already cited (24/03/2014 at 1:18 am). A small sample captures the line of his engagement:

Loyalty-preservation incentivizing programs are various and highly sophisticated and span the spectrum everywhere from frequent flier miles to 'clubs' that are so engrossing and time consuming in such as to mimic the fulfillment of all the community, socialization, and identarian psychological functions that would make even the hardest-core religious-traditionalist jealous. Because lots of people are genetically programmed with this coordination-subroutine that is easily exploitable in a context far removed from its evolutionary origins. Sometimes brands 'deserve' special competitive loyalty ('German engineering'!) and sometimes they don't (Tylenol-branded paracetamol).

There is vastly more that can, and will, be said in prosecution of this dispute, since it is perhaps the single most critical driver of NRx fission, and it is not going to endure a solution. The cold MNC claim, however, can be pushed right across it. Authority is for sale, and has been for centuries, so that any analysis ignoring this exchange nexus is an historical evasion. Marx's M-C-M', through which monetized capital reproduces and expands itself through the commodity cycle, is accompanied by an equally definite M-P-M' or P-M-P' cycle of power circulation-enhancement through monetized wealth.

A tempting reservation, with venerable roots in traditional society, is to cast doubt upon the prevalence of such exchange networks, on the assumption that power — possibly further dignified as 'authority' — enjoys a qualitative supplement relative to common economic value, such that it cannot be retro-transferred. Who would swap authority for money, if authority cannot be bought (and is, indeed, "beyond price")? But this 'problem' resolves itself, since the first person to sell political office — or its less formal equivalent — immediately demonstrates that it can no less easily be purchased.

From the earliest, most abstract stage of this MNC outline, it has been insisted that *power has to be evaluated economically, by itself, if anything like practical calculation directed towards its increase is to be possible*. Once this is granted, MNC analysis of the governmental entity in general as an economic processor — i.e. a business — acquires irresistible momentum. If loyalty, *asabiyyah*, virtue, charisma and other elevated (or 'incommensurable') values are *power factors*, then they are already inherently self-economizing within the calculus of

statecraft. The very fact that they contribute, determinately, to an overall estimation of strength and weakness, attests to their implicit economic status. When a business has charismatic leadership, reputational capital, or a strong culture of company loyalty, such factors are monetized as asset values by financial markets. When one Prince surveys the 'quality' of another's domain, he already estimates the likely expenses of enmity. For modern military bureaucracies, such calculations are routine. Incommensurable values do not survive contact with defense budgets.

Yet, however ominous this drift (from a romantic perspective), *MNC does not tell anybody how to design a society*. It says only that an effective government will necessarily look, to it, like a well-organized (sovereign) business. To this one can add the riders:
a) Government effectiveness is subject to an external criterion, provided by a selective trans-state and inter-state mechanism. This might take the form of Patchwork pressure (Dynamic Geography) in a civilized order, or military competition in the wolf-prowled wilderness of Hobbesian chaos.
b) Under these conditions, MNC calculative rationality can be expected to be compelling for states themselves, whatever their variety of social form. Some (considerable) convergence upon norms of economic estimation and arrangement is thus predictable from the discovered contours of reality. There are things that will fail.

Non-economic values are more easily invoked than pursued. Foseti (commenting here, 23/03/2014 at 11:59 am) writes:

No one disputes that the goal of society is a good citizenry, but the question is what sort of government provides that outcome. […] As best I can tell, we only have two theories of governance that have been expressed. […] The first is the capitalist. As Adam Smith noted, the best corporations (by all measures) are the ones that are operated for clear, measurable and selfish motives. […] The second is the communist. In this system, corporations are run for the benefit of everyone in the world. […] Unsurprisingly, corporations run on the latter principle have found an incredibly large number of ways to suck. Not coincidentally, so have 20th Century governments run on the same principle. […] I think it's nearly impossible to overstate the ways in which everyone would be better off if we had an efficiently, effective, and responsive government.

The Dark Enlightenment

This essay was first published as a series of posts on the thatsmags.com Urban Future blog between March and July 2012.

Part 1: Neo-reactionaries head for the exit

Enlightenment is not only a state, but an event, and a process. As the designation for an historical episode, concentrated in northern Europe during the 18th century, it is a leading candidate for the 'true name' of modernity, capturing its origin and essence ('Renaissance' and 'Industrial Revolution' are others). Between 'enlightenment' and 'progressive enlightenment' there is only an elusive difference, because illumination takes time – and feeds on itself, because enlightenment is self-confirming, its revelations 'self-evident', and because a retrograde, or reactionary, 'dark enlightenment' amounts almost to intrinsic contradiction. To become enlightened, in this historical sense, is to recognize, and then to pursue, a guiding light.

There were ages of darkness, and then enlightenment came. Clearly, advance has demonstrated itself, offering not only improvement, but also a model. Furthermore, unlike a renaissance, there is no need for an enlightenment to recall what was lost, or to emphasize the attractions of return. The elementary acknowledgement of enlightenment is already *Whig history* in miniature.

Once certain enlightened truths have been found self-evident, there can be no turning back, and conservatism is pre-emptively condemned – predestined — to paradox. F. A. Hayek, who refused to describe himself as a conservative, famously settled instead upon the term 'Old Whig', which – like 'classical liberal' (or the still more melancholy 'remnant') – accepts that progress isn't what it used to be. What could an Old Whig be, if not a reactionary progressive? And what on earth is that?

Of course, plenty of people already think they know what reactionary modernism looks like, and amidst the current collapse back into the 1930s their concerns are only likely to grow. Basically, it's what the 'F' word is for, at least in its progressive usage. A flight from democracy under these circumstances conforms so perfectly to expectations that it eludes specific recognition, appearing merely as an atavism, or confirmation of dire repetition.

Still, something is happening, and it is – at least in part – something else. One milestone was the April 2009 discussion hosted at Cato Unbound among libertarian thinkers (including Patri Friedman and Peter Thiel) in which disillusionment with the direction and possibilities of democratic politics was expressed with unusual forthrightness. Thiel summarized the trend bluntly: "I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible."

In August 2011, Michael Lind posted a democratic riposte at Salon, digging up some impressively malodorous dirt, and concluding:

The dread of democracy by libertarians and classical liberals is justified. Libertarianism really is incompatible with democracy. Most libertarians have made it clear which of the two they prefer. The only question that remains to be settled is why anyone should pay attention to libertarians.

Lind and the 'neo-reactionaries' seem to be in broad agreement that democracy is not only (or even) a *system*, but rather a *vector*, with an unmistakable direction. Democracy and 'progressive democracy' are synonymous, and indistinguishable from the expansion of the state. Whilst 'extreme right wing' governments have, on rare occasions, momentarily arrested this process, its reversal lies beyond the bounds of democratic possibility. Since winning elections is overwhelmingly a matter of vote buying, and society's informational organs (education and media) are no more resistant to bribery than the electorate, a thrifty politician is simply an incompetent politician, and the democratic variant of Darwinism quickly eliminates such misfits from the gene pool. This is a reality that the left applauds, the establishment right grumpily accepts, and the libertarian right has ineffectively railed against. Increasingly, however, libertarians have ceased to care whether anyone is 'pay[ing them] attention' – they have been looking for something else entirely: an exit.

It is a structural inevitability that the libertarian voice is drowned out in democracy, and according to Lind it should be. Ever more libertarians are likely to agree. 'Voice' is democracy itself, in its historically dominant, Rousseauistic strain. It models the state as a representation of popular will, and making oneself heard means more politics. If voting as the mass self-expression of politically empowered peoples is a nightmare engulfing the world, adding to the hubbub doesn't help. Even more than Equality-vs-Liberty, Voice-vs-Exit is the rising alternative, and libertarians are opting for voiceless flight. Patri Friedman remarks: "we think that free exit is so important that we've called it the only Universal Human Right."

For the hardcore neo-reactionaries, democracy is not merely doomed, it is doom itself. Fleeing it approaches an ultimate imperative. The subterranean current that propels such anti-politics is recognizably Hobbesian, a coherent dark enlightenment, devoid from its beginning of any Rousseauistic enthusiasm for popular expression. Predisposed, in any case, to perceive the politically awakened masses as a howling irrational mob, it conceives the dynamics of democratization as fundamentally degenerative: systematically consolidating and exacerbating private vices, resentments, and deficiencies until they reach the level of collective criminality and comprehensive social corruption. The democratic politician and the electorate are bound together by a circuit of reciprocal incitement, in which each side drives the other to ever more shameless extremities of hooting, prancing cannibalism, until the only alternative to shouting is being eaten.

Where the progressive enlightenment sees political ideals, the dark enlightenment sees appetites. It accepts that governments are made out of people, and that they will eat well. Setting its expectations as low as reasonably possible, it seeks only to spare civilization from frenzied, ruinous, gluttonous debauch. From Thomas Hobbes to Hans-Hermann Hoppe and beyond, it asks: How can the sovereign power be prevented – or at least dissuaded — from devouring society? It consistently finds democratic 'solutions' to this problem risible, at best.

Hoppe advocates an anarcho-capitalist 'private law society', but between monarchy and democracy he does not hesitate (and his argument is strictly Hobbesian):

As a hereditary monopolist, a king regards the territory and the people under his rule as his personal property and engages in the monopolistic exploitation of this "property." Under democracy, monopoly and monopolistic exploitation do not disappear. Rather, what happens is this: instead of a king and a nobility who regard the country as their private property, a temporary and interchangeable caretaker is put in monopolistic charge of the country. The caretaker does not own the country, but as long as he is in office he is permitted to use it to his and his protégés' advantage. He owns its current use – *usufruct*– but not its capital stock. This does not eliminate exploitation. To the contrary, it makes exploitation less calculating and carried out with little or no regard to the capital stock. Exploitation becomes shortsighted and capital consumption will be systematically promoted.

Political agents invested with transient authority by multi-party

democratic systems have an overwhelming (and demonstrably irresistible) incentive to plunder society with the greatest possible rapidity and comprehensiveness. Anything they neglect to steal – or 'leave on the table' – is likely to be inherited by political successors who are not only unconnected, but actually opposed, and who can therefore be expected to utilize all available resources to the detriment of their foes. Whatever is left behind becomes a weapon in your enemy's hand. Best, then, to destroy what cannot be stolen. From the perspective of a democratic politician, any type of social good that is neither directly appropriable nor attributable to (their own) partisan policy is sheer waste, and counts for nothing, whilst even the most grievous social misfortune – so long as it can be assigned to a prior administration or postponed until a subsequent one – figures in rational calculations as an obvious blessing. The long-range techno-economic improvements and associated accumulation of cultural capital that constituted social progress in its old (Whig) sense are in nobody's political interest. Once democracy flourishes, they face the immediate threat of extinction.

Civilization, as a process, is indistinguishable from diminishing time-preference (or declining concern for the present in comparison to the future). Democracy, which both in theory and evident historical fact accentuates time-preference to the point of convulsive feeding-frenzy, is thus as close to a precise negation of civilization as anything could be, short of instantaneous social collapse into murderous barbarism or zombie apocalypse (which it eventually leads to). As the democratic virus burns through society, painstakingly accumulated habits and attitudes of forward-thinking, prudential, human and industrial investment, are replaced by a sterile, orgiastic consumerism, financial incontinence, and a 'reality television' political circus. Tomorrow might belong to the other team, so it's best to eat it all now.

Winston Churchill, who remarked in neo-reactionary style that "the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter" is better known for suggesting "that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried." Whilst never exactly conceding that "OK, democracy sucks (in fact, it *really* sucks), but what's the alternative?" the implication is obvious. The general tenor of this sensibility is attractive to modern conservatives, because it resonates with their wry, disillusioned acceptance of relentless civilizational deterioration, and with the associated intellectual apprehension of capitalism as an unappetizing but ineliminable default social arrangement, which remains after all catastrophic or merely impractical alternatives have

been discarded. The market economy, on this understanding, is no more than a spontaneous survival strategy that stitches itself together amidst the ruins of a politically devastated world. Things will probably just get worse forever. So it goes.

So, what is the alternative? (There's certainly no point trawling through the 1930s for one.) "Can you imagine a 21st-century post-demotist society? One that saw itself as recovering from democracy, much as Eastern Europe sees itself as recovering from Communism?" asks supreme Sith Lord of the neo-reactionaries, Mencius Moldbug. "Well, I suppose that makes one of us."

Moldbug's formative influences are Austro-libertarian, but that's all over. As he explains:

… libertarians cannot present a realistic picture of a world in which their battle gets won and stays won. They wind up looking for ways to push a world in which the State's natural downhill path is to grow, back up the hill. This prospect is Sisyphean, and it's understandable why it attracts so few supporters.

His awakening into neo-reaction comes with the (Hobbesian) recognition that sovereignty cannot be eliminated, caged, or controlled. Anarcho-capitalist utopias can never condense out of science fiction, divided powers flow back together like a shattered Terminator, and constitutions have exactly as much real authority as a sovereign interpretative power allows them to have. The state isn't going anywhere because — to those who run it — it's worth far too much to give up, and as the concentrated instantiation of sovereignty in society, nobody can make it do anything. If the state cannot be eliminated, Moldbug argues, at least it can be cured of *democracy* (or systematic and degenerative bad government), and the way to do that is to *formalize* it. This is an approach he calls 'neo-cameralism'.

To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country. A state should be managed, like any other large business, by dividing logical ownership into negotiable shares, each of which yields a precise fraction of the state's profit. (A well-run state is very profitable.) Each share has one vote, and the shareholders elect a board, which hires and fires managers.

This business's customers are its residents. A profitably-managed neocameralist state will, like any business, serve its customers efficiently and effectively. Misgovernment equals mismanagement.

Firstly, it is essential to squash the democratic myth that a state 'belongs' to the citizenry. The point of neo-cameralism is to buy out the real stakeholders in sovereign power, not to perpetuate sentimental lies about mass enfranchisement. Unless ownership of the state is formally transferred into the hands of its actual rulers, the neo-cameral transition will simply not take place, power will remain in the shadows, and the democratic farce will continue.

So, secondly, the ruling class must be plausibly identified. It should be noted immediately, in contradistinction to Marxist principles of social analysis, that this is not the 'capitalist bourgeoisie'. Logically, it cannot be. The power of the business class is already clearly formalized, in monetary terms, so the identification of capital with political power is perfectly redundant. It is necessary to ask, rather, *who do capitalists pay for political favors*, how much these favors are potentially worth, and how the authority to grant them is distributed. This requires, with a minimum of moral irritation, that the entire social landscape of political bribery ('lobbying') is exactly mapped, and the administrative, legislative, judicial, media, and academic privileges accessed by such bribes are converted into fungible shares. Insofar as voters are worth bribing, there is no need to entirely exclude them from this calculation, although their portion of sovereignty will be estimated with appropriate derision. The conclusion of this exercise is the mapping of a ruling entity that is the truly dominant instance of the democratic polity. Moldbug calls it the *Cathedral*.

The formalization of political powers, thirdly, allows for the possibility of effective government. Once the universe of democratic corruption is converted into a (freely transferable) shareholding in *gov-corp*. the owners of the state can initiate rational corporate governance, beginning with the appointment of a CEO. As with any business, the interests of the state are now precisely formalized as the maximization of long-term shareholder value. There is no longer any need for residents (clients) to take any interest in politics whatsoever. In fact, to do so would be to exhibit semi-criminal proclivities. If *gov-corp* doesn't deliver acceptable value for its taxes (sovereign rent), they can notify its customer service function, and if necessary take their custom elsewhere. *Gov-corp* would concentrate upon running an efficient, attractive, vital, clean, and secure country, of a kind that is able to draw customers. No voice, free exit.

… although the full neocameralist approach has never been tried, its closest historical equivalents to this approach are the 18th-century tradition of enlightened absolutism as represented by Frederick the

Great, and the 21st-century nondemocratic tradition as seen in lost fragments of the British Empire such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai. These states appear to provide a very high quality of service to their citizens, with no meaningful democracy at all. They have minimal crime and high levels of personal and economic freedom. They tend to be quite prosperous. They are weak only in political freedom, and political freedom is unimportant by definition when government is stable and effective.

In European classical antiquity, democracy was recognized as a familiar phase of cyclical political development, fundamentally decadent in nature, and preliminary to a slide into tyranny. Today this classical understanding is thoroughly lost, and replaced by a global democratic ideology, entirely lacking in critical self-reflection, that is asserted not as a credible social-scientific thesis, or even as a spontaneous popular aspiration, but rather as a religious creed, of a specific, historically identifiable kind:

… a received tradition I call Universalism, which is a nontheistic Christian sect. Some other current labels for this same tradition, more or less synonymous, are progressivism, multiculturalism, liberalism, humanism, leftism, political correctness, and the like. … Universalism is the dominant modern branch of Christianity on the Calvinist line, evolving from the English Dissenter or Puritan tradition through the Unitarian, Transcendentalist, and Progressive movements. Its ancestral briar patch also includes a few sideways sprigs that are important enough to name but whose Christian ancestry is slightly better concealed, such as Rousseauvian laicism, Benthamite utilitarianism, Reformed Judaism, Comtean positivism, German Idealism, Marxist scientific socialism, Sartrean existentialism, Heideggerian postmodernism, etc, etc, etc. … Universalism, in my opinion, is best described as a *mystery cult of power*. … It's as hard to imagine Universalism without the State as malaria without the mosquito. … The point is that this thing, whatever you care to call it, is at least two hundred years old and probably more like five. It's basically the Reformation itself. … And just walking up to it and denouncing it as evil is about as likely to work as suing Shub-Niggurath in small-claims court.

To comprehend the emergence of our contemporary predicament, characterized by relentless, totalizing, state expansion, the proliferation of spurious positive 'human rights' (claims on the resources of others backed by coercive bureaucracies), politicized money, reckless evangelical 'wars for democracy', and comprehensive thought control arrayed in defense of universalistic dogma

(accompanied by the degradation of science into a government public relations function), it is necessary to ask how Massachusetts came to conquer the world, as Moldbug does. With every year that passes, the international ideal of sound governance finds itself approximating more closely and rigidly to the standards set by the Grievance Studies departments of New England universities. This is the divine providence of the ranters and levelers, elevated to a planetary teleology, and consolidated as the reign of the *Cathedral*.

The Cathedral has substituted its gospel for everything we ever knew. Consider just the concerns expressed by America's founding fathers (compiled by 'Liberty-clinger', comment #1, here):

A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51% of the people may take away the rights of the other 49%. — *Thomas Jefferson*

Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote! — *Benjamin Franklin*

Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. — *John Adams*

Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their death. — *James Madison*

We are a Republican Government, Real liberty is never found in despotism or in the extremes of democracy…it has been observed that a pure democracy if it were practicable would be the most perfect government. Experience has proved that no position is more false than this. The ancient democracies in which the people themselves deliberated never possessed one good feature of government. Their very character was tyranny… — *Alexander Hamilton*

More on voting with your feet (and the incandescent genius of Moldbug), next …

Added Note (March 7):

Don't trust the attribution of the 'Benjamin Franklin' quote, above. According to Barry Popik, the saying was probably invented by James Bovard, in 1992. (Bovard remarks elsewhere: "There are few more dangerous errors in political thinking than to equate democracy with

liberty.")

Part 2: The arc of history is long, but it bends towards zombie apocalypse

David Graeber: *It strikes me that if one is going to pursue this to its logical conclusion, the only way to have a genuinely democratic society would also be to abolish capitalism in this state.*

Marina Sitrin: *We can't have democracy with capitalism… Democracy and capitalism don't work together.*
(Here, via John J. Miller)

That's always the trouble with history. It always looks like it's over. But it never is.
(Mencius Moldbug)

Googling 'democracy' and 'liberty' together is highly enlightening, in a dark way. In cyberspace, at least, it is clear that only a distinct minority think of these terms as positively coupled. If opinion is to be judged in terms of the Google spider and its digital prey, by far the most prevalent association is disjunctive, or antagonistic, drawing upon the reactionary insight that democracy poses a lethal menace to liberty, all but ensuring its eventual eradication. Democracy is to liberty as Gargantua to a pie ("Surely you can see that we love liberty, to the point of gut-rumbling and salivation …").

Steve H. Hanke lays out the case authoritatively in his short essay *On Democracy Versus Liberty*, focused upon the American experience:

Most people, including most Americans, would be surprised to learn that the word "democracy" does not appear in the Declaration of Independence (1776) or the Constitution of the United States of America (1789). They would also be shocked to learn the reason for the absence of the word democracy in the founding documents of the U.S.A. Contrary to what propaganda has led the public to believe, America's Founding Fathers were skeptical and anxious about democracy. They were aware of the evils that accompany a tyranny of the majority. The Framers of the Constitution went to great lengths to ensure that the federal government was not based on the will of the majority and was not, therefore, democratic.

If the Framers of the Constitution did not embrace democracy, what did they adhere to? To a man, the Framers agreed that the purpose of government was to secure citizens in John Locke's trilogy of the rights to life, liberty and property.

He elaborates:

The Constitution is primarily a structural and procedural document that itemizes who is to exercise power and how they are to exercise it. A great deal of stress is placed on the separation of powers and the checks and balances in the system. These were not a Cartesian construct or formula aimed at social engineering, but a shield to protect the people from the government. In short, the Constitution was designed to govern the government, not the people.

The Bill of Rights establishes the rights of the people against infringements by the State. The only thing that the citizens can demand from the State, under the Bill of Rights, is for a trial by a jury. The rest of the citizens' rights are protections from the State. For roughly a century after the Constitution was ratified, private property, contracts and free internal trade within the United States were sacred. The scope and scale of the government remained very constrained. All this was very consistent with what was understood to be liberty.

As the spirit of reaction digs its Sith-tentacles into the brain, it becomes difficult to remember how the classical (or non-communist) progressive narrative could once have made sense. What were people thinking? What were they expecting from the emerging super-empowered, populist, cannibalistic state? Wasn't the eventual calamity entirely predictable? How was it ever possible to be a Whig?

The ideological credibility of radical democratization is not, of course, in question. As thinkers ranging from (Christian progressive) Walter Russell Mead to (atheistic reactionary) Mencius Moldbug have exhaustively detailed, it conforms so exactly to ultra-protestant religious enthusiasm that its power to animate the revolutionary soul should surprise nobody. Within just a few years of Martin Luther's challenge to the papal establishment, peasant insurrectionists were stringing up their class enemies all over Germany.

The empirical credibility of democratic advancement is far more perplexing, and also genuinely complex (which is to say controversial, or more precisely, worthy of a data-based, rigorously-argued controversy). In part, that is because the modern configuration of democracy emerges within the sweep of a far broader modernistic trend, whose techno-scientific, economic, social and political strands are obscurely interrelated, knitted together by misleading correlations, and subsequent false causalities. If, as Schumpeter argues, industrial capitalism tends to engender a democratic-bureaucratic culture that concludes in stagnation, it might nevertheless seem as though

democracy was ‘associated’ with material progress. It is easy to misconstrue a lagging indicator as a positive causal factor, especially when ideological zeal lends its bias to the misapprehension. In similar vein, since cancer only afflicts living beings, it might – with apparent reason — be associated with vitality.

Robin Hanson (gently) notes:

Yes many trends have been positive for a century or so, and yes this suggests they will continue to rise for a century or so. But no this does not mean that students are empirically or morally wrong for thinking it “utopian fantasy” that one could “end poverty, disease, tyranny, and war” by joining a modern-day Kennedy’s political quest. Why? Because positive recent trends in these areas were not much caused by such political movements! They were mostly caused by our getting rich from the industrial revolution, an event that political movements tended, if anything, to try to hold back on average.

Simple historical chronology suggests that industrialization supports progressive democratization, rather than being derived from it. This observation has even given rise to a widely accepted school of pop social science theorizing, according to which the ‘maturation’ of societies in a democratic direction is determined by thresholds of affluence, or middle-class formation. The strict logical correlate of such ideas, that democracy is *fundamentally non-productive* in relation to material progress, is typically under-emphasized. Democracy *consumes* progress. When perceived from the perspective of the dark enlightenment, the appropriate mode of analysis for studying the democratic phenomenon is general parasitology.

Quasi-libertarian responses to the outbreak accept this implicitly. Given a population deeply infected by the zombie virus and shambling into cannibalistic social collapse, the preferred option is quarantine. It is not communicative isolation that is essential, but a functional dis-solidarization of society that tightens feedback loops and exposes people with maximum intensity to the consequences of their own actions. Social solidarity, in precise contrast, is the parasite’s friend. By cropping out all high-frequency feedback mechanisms (such as market signals), and replacing them with sluggish, infra-red loops that pass through a centralized forum of ‘general will’, a radically democratized society insulates parasitism from what it does, transforming local, painfully dysfunctional, intolerable, and thus urgently corrected behavior patterns into global, numbed, and chronic socio-political pathologies.

Gnaw off other people's body parts and it might be hard to get a job — that's the kind of lesson a tight-feedback, cybernetically intense, *laissez faire* order would allow to be learned. It's also exactly the kind of insensitive zombiphobic discrimination that any compassionate democracy would denounce as thought crime, whilst boosting the public budget for the vitally-challenged, undertaking consciousness raising campaigns on behalf of those suffering from involuntary cannibalistic impulse syndrome, affirming the dignity of the zombie lifestyle in higher-education curriculums, and rigorously regulating workspaces to ensure that the shuffling undead are not victimized by profit-obsessed, performance-centric, or even unreconstructed animationist employers.

As enlightened zombie-tolerance flourishes in the shelter of the democratic mega-parasite, a small remnant of reactionaries, attentive to the effects of real incentives, raise the formulaic question: "You do realize that these policies lead inevitably to a massive expansion of the zombie population?" The dominant vector of history presupposes that such nuisance objections are marginalized, ignored, and — wherever possible – silenced through social ostracism. The remnant either fortifies the basement, whilst stocking up on dried food, ammunition, and silver coins, or accelerates the application process for a second passport, and starts packing its bags.

If all of this seems to be coming unmoored from historical concreteness, there's a conveniently topical remedy: a little digressive channel-hopping over to Greece. As a microcosmic model for the death of the West, playing out in real time, the Greek story is hypnotic. It describes a 2,500 year arc that is far from neat, but irresistibly dramatic, from proto-democracy to accomplished zombie apocalypse. Its pre-eminent virtue is that it perfectly illustrates the democratic mechanism *in extremis*, separating individuals and local populations from the consequences of their decisions by scrambling their behavior through large-scale, centralized re-distribution systems. You decide what you do, but then vote on the consequences. How could anyone say 'no' to that?

No surprise that over 30 years of EU membership Greeks have been eagerly cooperating with a social-engineering mega-project that strips out all short-wave social signals and re-routes feedback through the grandiose circuitry of European solidarity, ensuring that all economically-relevant information is red-shifted through the heat-death sump of the European Central Bank. Most specifically, it has conspired with 'Europe' to obliterate all information that might be contained in Greek interest rates, thus effectively disabling all

financial feedback on domestic policy choices.

This is democracy in a consummate form that defies further perfection, since nothing conforms more exactly to the 'general will' than the legislative abolition of reality, and nothing delivers the hemlock to reality more definitively than the coupling of Teutonic interest rates with East Mediterranean spending decisions. *Live like Hellenes and pay like Germans* — any political party that failed to rise to power on that platform deserves to scrabble for vulture-picked scraps in the wilderness. It's the ultimate *no-brainer*, in just about every imaginable sense of that expression. What could possibly go wrong?

More to the point, what did go wrong? Mencius Moldbug begins his *Unqualified Reservations* series How Dawkins got pwned (or taken over through an "exploitable vulnerability") with the outlining of design rules for a hypothetical "optimal memetic parasite" that would be "as virulent as possible. It will be highly contagious, highly morbid, and highly persistent. A really ugly bug." In comparison to this ideological super-plague, the vestigial monotheism derided in *The God Delusion* would figure as nothing worse than a moderately unpleasant head cold. What begins as abstract meme tinkering concludes as grand-sweep history, in the dark enlightenment mode:

My belief is that Professor Dawkins is not just a Christian atheist. He is a *Protestant atheist*. And he is not just a Protestant atheist. He is a *Calvinist atheist*. And he is not just a Calvinist atheist. He is an *Anglo-Calvinist atheist*. In other words, he can be also described as a Puritan atheist, a Dissenter atheist, a Nonconformist atheist, an Evangelical atheist, etc, etc.

This cladistic taxonomy traces Professor Dawkins' intellectual ancestry back about 400 years, to the era of the English Civil War. Except of course for the atheism theme, Professor Dawkins' kernel is a remarkable match for the Ranter, Leveller, Digger, Quaker, Fifth Monarchist, or any of the more extreme English Dissenter traditions that flourished during the Cromwellian interregnum.

Frankly, these dudes were freaks. Maniacal fanatics. Any mainstream English thinker of the 17th, 18th or 19th century, informed that this tradition (or its modern descendant) is now the planet's dominant Christian denomination, would regard this as a sign of imminent apocalypse. If you're sure they're wrong, you're more sure than me.

Fortunately, Cromwell himself was comparatively moderate. The

extreme ultra-Puritan sects never got a solid lock on power under the Protectorate. Even more fortunately, Cromwell got old and died, and Cromwellism died with him. Lawful government was restored to Great Britain, as was the Church of England, and Dissenters became a marginal fringe again. And frankly, a damned good riddance it was.

However, you can't keep a good parasite down. A community of Puritans fled to America and founded the theocratic colonies of New England. After its military victories in the American Rebellion and the War of Secession, American Puritanism was well on the way to world domination. Its victories in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War confirmed its global hegemony. All legitimate mainstream thought on Earth today is descended from the American Puritans, and through them the English Dissenters.

Given the rise of this "really ugly bug" to world dominion, it might seem strange to pick on tangential figure such as Dawkins, but Moldbug selects his target for exquisitely-judged strategic reasons. Moldbug identifies with Dawkins' Darwinism, with his intellectual repudiation of Abrahamic theism, and with his broad commitment to scientific rationality. Yet he recognizes, crucially, that Dawkins' critical faculties shut off – abruptly and often comically – at the point where they might endanger a still broader commitment to hegemonic progressivism. In this way, Dawkins is powerfully indicative. Militant secularism is itself a modernized variant of the Abrahamic meta-meme, on its Anglo-Protestant, radical democratic taxonomic branch, *whose specific tradition is anti-traditionalism*. The clamorous atheism of *The God Delusion* represents a protective feint, and a consistent upgrade of religious reformation, guided by a spirit of progressive enthusiasm that trumps empiricism and reason, whilst exemplifying an irritable dogmatism that rivals anything to be found in earlier God-themed strains.

Dawkins isn't merely an enlightened modern progressive and implicit radical democrat, he's an impressively credentialed scientist, more specifically a biologist, and (thus) a Darwinian evolutionist. The point at which he touches the limit of acceptable thinking as defined by the memetic super-bug is therefore quite easy to anticipate. His inherited tradition of low-church ultra-protestantism has replaced God with Man as the locus of spiritual investment, and 'Man' has been in the process of Darwinian research dissolution for over 150 years. (As the sound, decent person I know you are, having gotten this far with Moldbug you're probably already muttering under your breath, *don't mention race, don't mention race, don't mention race, please, oh please, in the name of the Zeitgeist and the dear sweet non-god of progress, don't*

mention race …) … but Moldbug is already citing Dawkins, citing Thomas Huxley "…in a contest which is to be carried out by thoughts and not by bites. The highest places in the hierarchy of civilization will assuredly not be within the reach of our dusky cousins." Which Dawkins frames by remarking: "Had Huxley… been born and educated in our time, [he] would have been the first to cringe with us at [his] Victorian sentiments and unctuous tone. I quote them only to illustrate how the *Zeitgeist* moves on."

It gets worse. Moldbug seems to be holding Huxley's hand, and … (ewww!) doing that palm-stroking thing with his finger. This sure ain't vanilla-libertarian reaction anymore — it's getting seriously dark, and scary. "In all seriousness, what is the evidence for fraternism? Why, exactly, does Professor Dawkins believe that all neohominids are born with identical potential for neurological development? He doesn't say. Perhaps he thinks it's obvious."

Whatever one's opinion on the respective scientific merits of human biological diversity or uniformity, it is surely beyond contention that the latter assumption, alone, is *tolerated*. Even if progressive-universalistic beliefs about human nature are true, they are not held because they are true, or arrived at through any process that passes the laugh test for critical scientific rationality. They are received as religious tenets, with all of the passionate intensity that characterizes essential items of faith, and to question them is not a matter of scientific inaccuracy, but of what we now call *political incorrectness*, and once knew as *heresy*.

To sustain this transcendent moral posture in relation to *racism* is no more rational than subscription to the doctrine of *original sin*, of which it is, in any case, the unmistakable modern substitute. The difference, of course, is that 'original sin' is a traditional doctrine, subscribed to by an embattled social cohort, significantly under-represented among public intellectuals and media figures, deeply unfashionable in the dominant world culture, and widely criticized – if not derided – without any immediate assumption that the critic is advocating murder, theft, or adultery. To question the status of racism as the supreme and defining social sin, on the other hand, is to court universal condemnation from social elites, and to arouse suspicions of *thought crimes* that range from pro-slavery apologetics to genocide fantasies. Racism is *pure or absolute evil*, whose proper sphere is the infinite and the eternal, or the incendiary sinful depths of the hyper-protestant soul, rather than the mundane confines of civil interaction, social scientific realism, or efficient and proportional legality. The dissymmetry of affect, sanction, and raw social power attending old

heresies and their replacements, once noticed, is a nagging indicator. A new sect reigns, and it is not even especially well hidden.

Yet even among the most hardened HBD constituencies, hysterical sanctification of plus-good race-think hardly suffices to lend radical democracy the aura of profound morbidity that Moldbug detects. That requires a devotional relation to the State.

Part 3:

The previous installment of this series ended with our hero Mencius Moldbug, up to his waist (or worse) in the mephitic swamp of political incorrectness, approaching the dark heart of his politico-religious meditation on *How Dawkins Got Pwned*. Moldbug has caught Dawkins in the midst of a symptomatically significant, and excruciatingly sanctimonious, denunciation of Thomas Huxley's racist "Victorian sentiments" – a sermon which concludes with the strange declaration that he is quoting Huxley's words, despite their self-evident and wholly intolerable ghastliness, "only to illustrate how the *Zeitgeist* moves on."

Moldbug pounces, asking pointedly: "What, exactly, is this Zeitgeist thing?" It is, indisputably, an extraordinary catch. Here is a thinker (Dawkins), trained as a biologist, and especially fascinated by the (disjunctively) twinned topics of naturalistic evolution and Abrahamic religion, stumbling upon what he apprehends as a one-way trend of world-historical spiritual development, which he then – emphatically, but without the slightest appeal to disciplined reason or evidence – denies has any serious connection to the advance of science, human biology, or religious tradition. The stammering nonsense that results is a thing of wonder, but for Moldbug it all makes sense:

In fact, Professor Dawkins' *Zeitgeist* is … indistinguishable from … the old Anglo-Calvinist or Puritan concept of *Providence*. Perhaps this is a false match. But it's quite a close one.

Another word for *Zeitgeist* is *Progress*. It's unsurprising that Universalists tend to believe in Progress- in fact, in a political context, they often call themselves *progressives*. Universalism has indeed made quite a bit of progress since [the time of Huxley's embarrassing remark in] 1913. But this hardly refutes the proposition that Universalism is a parasitic tradition. Progress for the tick is not progress for the dog.

What, exactly, is this *Zeitgeist* thing? The question bears repeating. Is it not astounding, to begin with, that when one English Darwinian reaches for a weapon to club another, the most convenient cudgel to hand should be a German word — associated with an abstruse lineage of state-worshipping idealistic philosophy — explicitly referencing a conception of historical time that has no discernible connection to the process of naturalistic evolution? It is as if, scarcely imaginably, during a comparable contention among physicists (on the topic of quantum indeterminacy), one should suddenly hear it shouted that "God does not play dice with the universe." In fact, the two examples are intimately entangled, since Dawkins' faith in the *Zeitgeist* is combined with adherence to the dogmatic progressivism of 'Einsteinian Religion' (meticulously dissected, of course, by Moldbug).

The shamelessness is remarkable, or at least it would be, were it naively believed that the protocols of scientific rationality occupied sovereign position in such disputation, if only in principle. In fact – and here irony is amplified to the very brink of howling psychosis – Einstein's Old One still reigns. The criteria of judgment owe everything to neo-puritan spiritual hygiene, and nothing whatsoever to testable reality. Scientific utterance is screened for conformity to a progressive social agenda, whose authority seems to be unaffected by its complete indifference to scientific integrity. It reminds Moldbug of Lysenko, for understandable reasons.

"If the facts do not agree with the theory, so much worse for the facts" Hegel asserted. It is the *Zeitgeist* that is God, historically incarnated in the state, trampling mere data back into the dirt. By now, everybody knows where this ends. An egalitarian moral ideal, hardened into a universal axiom or increasingly incontestable dogma, completes modernity's supreme historical irony by making 'tolerance' the iron criterion for the limits of (cultural) toleration. Once it is accepted universally, or, speaking more practically, by all social forces wielding significant cultural power, that *intolerance is intolerable*, political authority has legitimated anything and everything convenient to itself, without restraint.

That is the magic of the dialectic, or of logical perversity. When only *tolerance is tolerable*, and everyone (who matters) accepts this manifestly nonsensical formula as not only rationally intelligible, but as the universally-affirmed principle of modern democratic faith, nothing except politics remains. Perfect tolerance and absolute intolerance have become logically indistinguishable, with either equally interpretable as the other, A = not-A, or the inverse, and in the nakedly Orwellian world that results, power alone holds the keys

of articulation. Tolerance has progressed to such a degree that it has become a social police function, providing the existential pretext for new inquisitional institutions. ("We must remember that those who tolerate intolerance abuse tolerance itself, and an enemy of tolerance is an enemy of democracy," Moldbug ironizes.)

The spontaneous tolerance that characterized classical liberalism, rooted in a modest set of strictly negative rights that restricted the domain of politics, or government intolerance, surrenders during the democratic surge-tide to a positive *right to be tolerated*, defined ever more expansively as substantial entitlement, encompassing public affirmations of dignity, state-enforced guarantees of equal treatment by all agents (public and private), government protections against non-physical slights and humiliations, economic subsidies, and – ultimately – statistically proportional representation within all fields of employment, achievement, and recognition. That the eschatological culmination of this trend is simply impossible matters not at all to the dialectic. On the contrary, it energizes the political process, combusting any threat of policy satiation in the fuel of infinite grievance. "I will not cease from Mental Fight, Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand: Till we have built Jerusalem, In England's green and pleasant land." Somewhere before Jerusalem is reached, the inarticulate pluralism of a free society has been transformed into the assertive multiculturalism of a soft-totalitarian democracy.

The Jews of 17th-century Amsterdam, or the Huguenots of 18th-century London, enjoyed the right to be left alone, and enriched their host societies in return. The democratically-empowered grievance groups of later modern times are incited by political leaders to demand a (fundamentally illiberal) *right to be heard*, with social consequences that are predominantly malignant. For politicians, however, who identify and promote themselves as the voice of the unheard and the ignored, the self-interest at stake could hardly be more obvious.

Tolerance, which once presupposed neglect, now decries it, and in so doing becomes its opposite. Were this a partisan development, partisan politics of a democratic kind might sustain the possibility of reversion, but it is nothing of the kind. "When someone is hurting, government has got to move" declared 'compassionate conservative' US President George W. Bush, in a futile effort to channel the Cathedral. When the 'right' sounds like this it is not only dead, but unmistakably reeking of advanced decomposition. 'Progress' has won, but is that bad? Moldbug approaches the question rigorously:

If a tradition causes its hosts to make miscalculations that compromise their personal goals, it exhibits Misesian morbidity. If it causes its hosts to act in ways that compromise their genes' reproductive interests, it exhibits Darwinian morbidity. If subscribing to the tradition is individually advantageous or neutral (defectors are rewarded, or at least unpunished) but collectively harmful, the tradition is parasitic. If subscribing is individually disadvantageous but collectively beneficial, the tradition is altruistic. If it is both individually and collectively benign, it is symbiotic. If it is both individually and collectively harmful, it is malignant. Each of these labels can be applied to either Misesian or Darwinian morbidity. A theme that is arational, but does not exhibit either Misesian or Darwinian morbidity, is trivially morbid.

Behaviorally considered, the Misesian and Darwinian systems are clusters of 'selfish' incentives, oriented respectively to property accumulation and gene propagation. Whilst the Darwinians conceive the 'Misesian' sphere as a special case of genetically self-interested motivation, the Austrian tradition, rooted in highly rationalized neo-kantian anti-naturalism, is pre-disposed to resist such reductionism. Whilst the ultimate implications of this contest are considerable, under current conditions it is a squabble of minor urgency, since both formations are united in 'hate', which is to say, in their reactionary tolerance for incentive structures that punish the maladapted.

'Hate' is a word to pause over. It testifies with special clarity to the religious orthodoxy of the Cathedral, and its peculiarities merit careful notice. Perhaps its most remarkable feature is its perfect redundancy, when evaluated from the perspective of any analysis of legal and cultural norms that is not enflamed by neo-puritan evangelical enthusiasm. A 'hate crime', if it is anything at all, is just a crime, plus 'hate', and what the 'hate' adds is telling. To restrict ourselves, momentarily, to examples of uncontroversial criminality, one might ask: what is it exactly that *aggravates* a murder, or assault, if the motivation is attributed to 'hate'? Two factors seem especially prominent, and neither has any obvious connection to common legal norms.

Firstly, the crime is augmented by a purely ideational, ideological, or even 'spiritual' element, attesting not only to a violation of civilized conduct, but also to a heretical intention. This facilitates the complete abstraction of hate from criminality, whereupon it takes the form of 'hate-speech' or simply 'hate' (which is always to be contrasted with the 'passion', 'outrage', or righteous 'anger' represented by critical, controversial, or merely abusive language directed against

unprotected groups, social categories, or individuals). 'Hate' is an offense against the Cathedral itself, a refusal of its spiritual guidance, and a mental act of defiance against the manifest religious destiny of the world.

Secondly, and relatedly, 'hate' is deliberately and even strategically asymmetrical in respect to the equilibrium political polarity of advanced democratic societies. Between the relentless march of progress and the ineffective grouching of conservatism it does not vacillate. As we have seen, only the right can 'hate'. As the doxological immunity system of 'hate' suppression is consolidated within elite educational and media systems, the highly selective distribution of protections ensures that 'discourse' – especially empowered discourse – is ratcheted consistently to the left, which is to say, in the direction of an ever more comprehensively radicalized Universalism. The morbidity of this trend is extreme.

Because grievance status is awarded as political compensation for economic incompetence, it constructs an automatic cultural mechanism that advocates for dysfunction. The Universalist creed, with its reflex identification of inequality with injustice, can conceive no alternative to the proposition that the lower one's situation or status, the more compelling is one's claim upon society, the purer and nobler one's cause. Temporal failure is the sign of spiritual election (Marxo-Calvinism), and to dispute any of this is clearly 'hate'.

This does not compel even the most hard-hearted neo-reactionary to suggest, in a caricature of the high Victorian cultural style, that social disadvantage, as manifested in political violence, criminality, homelessness, insolvency, and welfare dependency, is a simple index of moral culpability. In large part – perhaps overwhelmingly large part – it reflects sheer misfortune. Dim, impulsive, unhealthy, and unattractive people, reared chaotically in abusive families, and stranded in broken, crime-wracked communities, have every reason to curse the gods before themselves. Besides, disaster can strike anyone.

In regards to effective incentive structures, however, none of this is of the slightest importance. Behavioral reality knows only one iron law: **Whatever is subsidized is promoted**. With a necessity no weaker than that of entropy itself, insofar as social democracy seeks to soften bad consequences – for major corporations no less than for struggling individuals or hapless cultures — things get worse. There is no way around, or beyond this formula, only wishful thinking, and complicity with degeneration. Of course, this defining reactionary insight is doomed to inconsequence, since it amounts to the supremely

unpalatable conclusion that every attempt at 'progressive' improvement is fated to reverse itself, 'perversely', into horrible failure. No democracy could accept this, which means that every democracy will fail.

The excited spiral of Misesian-Darwinian degenerative runaway is neatly captured in the words of the world's fluffiest Beltway libertarian, Megan McArdle, writing in core Cathedral-mouthpiece *The Atlantic*:

It is somewhat ironic that the first serious strains caused by Europe's changing demographics are showing up in the Continent's welfare budgets, because the pension systems themselves may well have shaped, and limited, Europe's growth. The 20th century saw international adoption of social-security systems that promised defined benefits paid out of future tax revenue—known to pension experts as "paygo" systems, and to critics as Ponzi schemes. These systems have greatly eased fears of a destitute old age, but multiple studies show that as social-security systems become more generous (and old age more secure), people have fewer children. By one estimate, 50 to 60 percent of the difference between America's (above-replacement) birthrate and Europe's can be explained by the latter's more generous systems. In other words, Europe's pension system may have set in motion the very demographic decline that helped make that system—and some European governments—insolvent.

Despite McArdle's ridiculous suggestion that the United States of America has in some way exempted itself from Europe's mortuary path, the broad outline of the diagnosis is clear, and increasingly accepted as commonsensical (although best ignored). According to the rising creed, welfare attained through progeny and savings is non-universal, and thus morally-benighted. It should be supplanted, as widely and rapidly as possible, by universal benefits or 'positive rights' distributed universally to the democratic citizen and thus, inevitably, routed through the altruistic State. If as a result, due to the irredeemable political incorrectness of reality, economies and populations should collapse in concert, at least it will not damage our souls. Oh democracy! You saccharine-sweet dying idiot, what do you think the zombie hordes will care for your soul?

Moldbug comments:

Universalism, in my opinion, is best described as a mystery cult of power.

It's a cult of power because one critical stage in its replicative lifecycle is a little critter called the State. When we look at the big U's surface proteins, we notice that most of them can be explained by its need to capture, retain, and maintain the State, and direct its powers toward the creation of conditions that favor the continued replication of Universalism. It's as hard to imagine Universalism without the State as malaria without the mosquito.

It's a mystery cult because it displaces theistic traditions by replacing metaphysical superstitions with philosophical mysteries, such as humanity, progress, equality, democracy, justice, environment, community, peace, etc.

None of these concepts, as defined in orthodox Universalist doctrine, is even slightly coherent. All can absorb arbitrary mental energy without producing any rational thought. In this they are best compared to Plotinian, Talmudic, or Scholastic nonsense.

As a bonus, here's the Urban Feature guide to the main sequence of modern political regimes:

Regime(1): Communist Tyranny
Typical Growth: ~0%
Voice / Exit: Low / Low
Cultural climate: Pyschotic utopianism
Life is … hard but 'fair'
Transition mechanism: Re-discovers markets at economic degree-zero

Regime(2): Authoritarian Capitalism
Typical Growth: 5-10%
Voice / Exit: Low / High
Cultural climate: Flinty realism
Life is … hard but productive
Transition mechanism: Pressurized by the Cathedral to democratize

Regime(3): Social Democracy
Typical Growth: 0-3%
Voice / Exit: High / High
Cultural climate: Sanctimonious dishonesty
Life is … soft and unsustainable
Transition mechanism: Can-kicking runs out of road

Regime(4): Zombie Apocalypse
Typical Growth: N/A

Voice / Exit: High (mostly useless screaming) / High (with fuel, ammo, dried food, precious metal coins)
Cultural climate: Survivalism
Life is … hard-to-impossible
Transition mechanism: Unknown

For all regimes, growth expectations assume moderately competent population, otherwise go straight to (4).

Part 4: Re-running the race to ruin

Liberals are baffled and infuriated that poor whites vote Republican, yet voting on tribal grounds is a feature of all multi-ethnic democracies, whether [in] Northern Ireland, Lebanon or Iraq. The more a majority becomes a minority the more tribal its voting becomes, so that increasingly the Republicans have become the "white party"; making this point indelicately got Pat Buchanan the sack, but many others make it too.

Will it happen here [in the UK]? The patterns are not dissimilar. In the 2010 election the Conservatives won only 16 per cent of the ethnic minority vote, while Labour won the support of 72 per cent of Bangladeshis, 78 per cent of African-Caribbeans and 87 per cent of Africans. The Tories are slightly stronger among British Hindus and Sikhs – mirroring Republican support among Asian-Americans – who are more likely to be home-owning professionals and feel less alienated.

The Economist recently asked if the Tories had a "race problem", but it may just be that democracy has a race problem.
— Ed West (here)

Without a taste for irony, Mencius Moldbug is all but unendurable, and certainly unintelligible. Vast structures of historical irony shape his writings, at times even engulfing them. How otherwise could a proponent of traditional configurations of social order – a self-proclaimed Jacobite – compose a body of work that is stubbornly dedicated to subversion?

Irony is Moldbug's method, as well as his milieu. This can be seen, most tellingly, in his chosen name for the usurped enlightenment, the dominant faith of the modern world: Universalism. This is a word that he appropriates (and capitalizes) within a reactionary diagnosis whose entire force lies in its exposure of an exorbitant particularity.

Moldbug turns continually to history (or, more rigorously, *cladistics*), to accurately specify that which asserts its own universal

significance whilst ascending to a state of general dominance that approaches the universal. Under this examination, what counts as Universal reason, determining the direction and meaning of modernity, is revealed as the minutely determined branch or sub-species of a cultic tradition, descended from 'ranters', 'levelers', and closely related variants of dissident, ultra-protestant fanaticism, and owing vanishingly little to the conclusions of logicians.

Ironically, then, the world's regnant *Universalist* democratic-egalitarian faith is a particular or peculiar cult that has *broken out*, along identifiable historical and geographical pathways, with an epidemic virulence that is disguised as progressive global enlightenment. The route that it has taken, through England and New England, Reformation and Revolution, is recorded by an accumulation of traits that provide abundant material for irony, and for lower varieties of comedy. The unmasking of the modern 'liberal' intellectual or 'open-minded' media 'truth-teller' as a pale, fervent, narrowly doctrinaire puritan, recognizably descended from the species of witch-burning zealots, is reliably – and irresistibly – entertaining.

Yet, as the Cathedral extends and tightens its grip upon everything, everywhere, in accordance with its divine mandate, the response it triggers is only atypically humorous. More commonly, when unable to exact humble compliance, it encounters inarticulate rage, or at least uncomprehending, smoldering resentment, as befits the imposition of parochial cultural dogmas, still wrapped in the trappings of a specific, alien pedigree, even as they earnestly confess to universal rationality.

Consider, for instance, the most famous words of America's *Declaration of Independence*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights …" Could it be honestly maintained that to submit, scrupulously and sincerely, to such 'self-evident' truths amounts to anything other than an act of religious re-confirmation or conversion? Or denied that, in these words, reason and evidence are explicitly *set aside*, to make room for principles of faith? Could anything be less scientific than such a declaration, or more indifferent to the criteria of genuinely universal reasoning? How could anybody who was not *already a believer* be expected to consent to such assumptions?

That the founding statement of the democratic-republican creed should be formulated as a statement of pure (and doctrinally recognizable) faith is information of sorts, but it is not yet irony. The irony begins with the fact that among the elites of today's Cathedral,

these words of the Declaration of Independence (as well as many others) would be found – almost universally – to be quaintly suggestive at best, perhaps vaguely embarrassing, and most certainly incapable of supporting literal assent. Even amongst libertarian-slanted conservatives, a firm commitment to 'natural rights' is unlikely to proceed confidently and emphatically to their divine origination. For modern 'liberals', believers in the rights-bestowing (or entitlement) State, such archaic ideas are not only absurdly dated, but positively obstructive. For that reason, they are associated less with revered predecessors than with the retarded, fundamentalist thinking of political enemies. Sophisticates of the Cathedral core understand, as Hegel did, that God is no more than deep government apprehended by infants, and as such a waste of faith (that bureaucrats could put to better use).

Since the Cathedral has ascended to global supremacy, it no longer has need for Founding Fathers, who awkwardly recall its parochial ancestry, and impede its transnational public relations. Rather, it seeks perpetual re-invigoration through their denigration. The phenomenon of the 'New Atheism', with its transparent progressive affiliations, attests abundantly to this. Paleo-puritanism must be derided in order for neo-puritanism to flourish – *the meme is dead, long live the meme*!

At the limit of self-parody, neo-puritan parricide takes the form of the ludicrous 'War on Christmas', in which the allies of the Cathedral sanctify the (radically unthreatened) separation of Church and State through nuisance agitation against public expressions of traditional Christian piety, and their 'Red State' dupes respond with dyspeptic outrage on cable TV shows. Like every other war against fuzzy nouns (whether 'poverty', 'drugs', or 'terror'), the outcome is predictably perverse. If resistance to the War on Christmas is not yet established as the solid center of Yuletide festivities, it can be confidently expected to become so in the future. The purposes of the Cathedral are served nonetheless, through promotion of a synthetic secularism that separates the progressive faith from its religious foundations, whilst directing attention away from the ethnically specific, dogmatic creedal content at its core.

As reactionaries go, traditional Christians are generally considered to be quite cuddly. Even the most wild-eyed fanatics of the neo-puritan orthodoxy have trouble getting genuinely excited about them (although abortion activists get close). For some real red meat, with the nerves exposed and writhing to jolts of hard stimulation, it makes far more sense to turn to another discarded and ceremonially abominated block on the progressive lineage: White Identity Politics,

or (the term Moldbug opts for) ‘white nationalism’.

Just as the ratchet progress of neo-puritan social democracy is radically facilitated by the orchestrated pillorying of its embryonic religious forms, so is its trend to consistently neo-fascist political economy smoothed by the concerted repudiation of a ‘neo-nazi’ (or paleo-fascist) threat. It is extremely convenient, when constructing ever more nakedly corporatist or ‘third position’ structures of state-directed pseudo-capitalism, to be able to divert attention to angry expressions of white racial paranoia, especially when these are ornamented by clumsily modified nazi insignia, horned helmets, Leni Riefenstahl aesthetics, and slogans borrowed freely from *Mein Kampf*. In the United States (and thus, with shrinking time-lag, internationally) the icons of the Ku Klux Klan, from white bed-sheets, quasi-Masonic titles, and burning crosses, to lynching ropes, have acquired comparable theatrical value.

Moldbug offers a sanitized white nationalist blog reading list, consisting of writers who – to varying degrees of success – avoid immediate reversion to paleo-fascist self-parody. The first step beyond the boundary of respectable opinion is represented by Lawrence Auster, a Christian, anti-Darwinist, and ‘Traditionalist Conservative’ who defends ‘substantial’ (ethno-racial) national identity and opposes the liberal master-principle of nondiscrimination. By the time we reach ‘Tanstaafl’, at the ripped outer edge of Moldbug’s carefully truncated spectrum, we have entered a decaying orbit, spiraling into the great black hole that is hidden at the dead center of modern political possibility.

Before following the Tanstaafl-types into the crushing abyss where light dies, there are some preliminary remarks to make about the white nationalist perspective, and its implications. Even more than the Christian traditionalists (who, even in their cultural mid-winter, can bask in the warmth of supernatural endorsement), white identity politics considers itself *besieged*. Moderate or measured concern offers no equilibrium for those who cross the line, and begin to self-identify in these terms. Instead, the path of involvement demands rapid acceleration to a state of extreme alarm, or racial panic, conforming to an analysis focused upon malicious population replacement at the hands of a government which, in the oft-cited words of Bertolt Brecht, “has decided to dissolve the people, and to appoint another one.” ‘Whiteness’ (whether conceived biologically, mystically, or both) is associated with vulnerability, fragility, and persecution. This theme is so basic, and so multifarious, that it is difficult to adequately address succinctly. It encompasses everything from criminal predation

(especially racially-charged murders, rapes, and beatings), economic exactions and inverse discrimination, cultural aggression by hostile academic and media systems, and ultimately 'genocide' – or definitive racial destruction.

Typically, the prospective annihilation of the white race is attributed to its own systematic vulnerability, whether due to characteristic cultural traits (excessive altruism, susceptibility to moral manipulation, excessive hospitality, trust, universal reciprocity, guilt, or individualistic disdain for group identity), or more immediate biological factors (recessive genes supporting fragile Aryan phenotypes). Whilst it is unlikely that this sense of unique endangerment is reducible to the chromatic formula 'White + Color = Color', the fundamental structure is of this kind. In its abstract depiction of non-reciprocal vulnerability, it reflects the 'one drop rule' (and Mendelian recessive / dominant gene combination). It depicts mixture as essentially anti-white.

Because 'whiteness' is a limit (pure absence of color), it slips smoothly from the biological factuality of the Caucasian sub-species into metaphysical and mystical ideas. Rather than accumulating genetic variation, a white race is contaminated or polluted by admixtures that compromise its defining negativity – to darken it is to destroy it. The mythological density of these — predominantly subliminal – associations invests white identity politics with a resilience that frustrates enlightened efforts at rationalistic denunciation, whilst contradicting its own paranoid self-representation. It also undermines recent white nationalist promotions of a racial threat that is strictly comparable to that facing indigenous peoples, universally, and depicting whites as 'natives' cruelly deprived of equal protection against extinction. There is no route back to tribal innocence, or flat, biological diversity. Whiteness has been compacted indissolubly with ideology, whichever the road taken.

"If Blacks can have it, and Hispanics can have it, and Jews can have it, why can't we have it?" – That's the final building block of white nationalist grievance, the werewolf curse that means it can only ever be a monster. There's exactly one way out for persecuted palefaces, and it leads straight into a black hole. We promised to get back to Tanstaafl, and here we are, in late Summer 2007, shortly after he got 'the Jew thing'. There isn't anything very original about his epiphany, which is exactly the point. He quotes himself:

Isn't it absurd that anyone would even think to blame Christianity or WASPs for the rise of PC and its catastrophic consequences? Isn't this

in fact a reversal of the truth? Hasn't the rise and spread of PC eroded the power of Christianity, WASPs, and whites in general? Blaming them is in effect blaming the victim.

Yes, there are Christians, WASPs, and whites who have fallen for the PC brainwashing. Yes, there are some who have taken it so deeply to heart that they work to expand and protect it. That's the nature of PC. That is its purpose. To control the minds of the people it seeks to destroy. The left, at its root, is all about destruction.

You don't have to be an anti-Semite to notice where these ideas originate from and who benefits. But you do have to violate PC to say: Jews.

That's the labyrinth, the trap, with its pitifully constricted, stereotypical circuit. "Why can't we be cuddly racial preservationists, like Amazonian Indians? How come we always turn into Neo-Nazis? It's some kind of conspiracy, which means *it has to be the Jews*." Since the mid-20th century, the political intensity of the globalized world has streamed, almost exclusively, out of the cratered ash-pile of the Third Reich. Until you get the pattern, it seems mysterious that there's no getting away from it. After listing some blogs falling under the relatively genteel category of 'white nationalism', Moldbug cautions:

The Internet is also home to many out-and-out racist blogs. Most are simply unreadable. But some are hosted by relatively capable writers … On these racist blogs you'll find racial epithets, anti-Semitism (see why I am not an anti-Semite) and the like. Obviously, I cannot recommend any of these blogs, and nor will I link to them. However, if you are interested in the mind of the modern racist, Google will get you there.

Google is overkill. A little link-trawling will get you there. It's a 'six degrees of separation' problem (and more like two, or less). Start digging into the actually existing 'reactosphere', and things get quite astoundingly ugly very quickly. Yes, there really is 'hate', panic, and disgust, as well as a morbidly addictive abundance of very grim, vitriolic wit, and a disconcertingly impressive weight of credible fact (these guys just *love* statistics to death). Most of all, just beyond the horizon, there's the black hole. If reaction ever became a popular movement, its few slender threads of bourgeois (or perhaps dreamily 'aristocratic') civility wouldn't hold back the beast for long.

As liberal decency has severed itself from intellectual integrity, and exiled harsh truths, these truths have found new allies, and become

considerably harsher. The outcome is mechanically, and monotonously, predictable. Every liberal democratic 'cause war' strengthens and feralizes what it fights. The war on poverty creates a chronically dysfunctional underclass. The war on drugs creates crystallized super-drugs and mega-mafias. Guess what? The war on political incorrectness creates data-empowered, web-coordinated, paranoid and poly-conspiratorial werewolves, superbly positioned to take advantage of liberal democracy's impending rendezvous with ruinous reality, and to then play their part in the unleashing of unpleasantnesses that are scarcely imaginable (except by disturbing historical analogy). When a sane, pragmatic, and fact-based negotiation of human differences is forbidden by ideological fiat, the alternative is not a reign of perpetual peace, but a festering of increasingly self-conscious and militantly defiant *thoughtcrime*, nourished by publicly unavowable realities, and energized by powerful, atavistic, and palpably dissident mythologies. That's obvious, on the 'Net.

Moldbug considers the danger of white nationalism to be both over- and understated. On the one hand, the 'menace' is simply ridiculous, and merely reflects neo-puritan spiritual dogma in its most hysterically oppressive and stubbornly mindless form. "It should be obvious that, although I am not a white nationalist, I am not exactly allergic to the stuff," Moldbug remarks, before describing it as "the most marginalized and socially excluded belief system in the history of the world … an obnoxious social irritant in any circle which does not include tattooed speedfreak bikers."

Yet the danger remains, or rather, is *under construction*.

I can imagine one possibility which might make white nationalism genuinely dangerous. White nationalism would be dangerous if there was some issue on which white nationalists were right, and everyone else was wrong. Truth is always dangerous. Contrary to common belief, it does not always prevail. But it's always a bad idea to turn your back on it. …While the evidence for human cognitive biodiversity is indeed debatable, what's not debatable is that it is debatable …[even though] everyone who is not a white nationalist has spent the last 50 years informing us that it is not debatable …

There's far more to Moldbug's essay, as there always is. Eventually it explains why he rejects white nationalism, on grounds that owe nothing to conventional reflexes. But the dark heart of the essay, lifting it beyond brilliance to the brink of genius, is found early on, at the edge of a black hole:

Why does white nationalism strike us as evil? Because Hitler was a white nationalist, and Hitler was evil. Neither of these statements is remotely controvertible. There is exactly one degree of separation between white nationalism and evil. And that degree is Hitler. Let me repeat: Hitler.

The argument seems watertight. (Hitlertight?) But it holds no water at all.

Why does socialism strike us as evil? Because Stalin was a socialist, and Stalin was evil. Anyone who wants to seriously argue that Stalin was less evil than Hitler has an awful long row to hoe. Not only did Stalin order more murders, his murder machine had its heyday in peacetime, whereas Hitler's can at least be seen as a war crime against enemy civilians. Whether this makes a difference can be debated, but if it does it puts Stalin on top.

And yet I have never had or seen anything like the "red flags" response to socialism ["the sense of the presence of evil"]. If I saw a crowd of young, fashionable people lining up at the box office for a hagiographic biopic on Reinhard Heydrich, chills would run up and down my neck. For Ernesto Guevara, I have no emotional response. Perhaps I think it's stupid and sad. I do think it's stupid and sad. But it doesn't freak me out.

Any attempt to be nuanced, balanced, or proportional in the moral case against Hitler is to entirely misconstrue the nature of the phenomenon. This can be noted, quite regularly, in Asian societies, for instance, because the ghost of the Third Reich does not occupy central position in their history, or rather, their *religion*, although – as the inner sanctum of the Cathedral — it is determined to (and shows almost every sign of succeeding). A brief digression on cross-cultural misunderstanding and reciprocal blindness might be merited at this point. When Westerners pay attention to the 'God-Emperor' style of political devotion that has accompanied modern totalitarianism in East Asia, the conclusion typically drawn is that this pattern of political feeling is exotically alien, morbidly amusing, and ultimately – chillingly — incomprehensible. Contemporary comparisons with laughably non-numinous Western democratic leaders only deepen the confusion, as do clumsy quasi-Marxist references to 'feudal' sensibilities (as if absolute monarchy was not an *alternative* to feudalism, and as if absolute monarchs were worshipped). *How could a historical and political figure ever be invested with the transcendent dignity of absolute religious meaning?* It seems absurd …

"Look, I'm not saying that Hitler was a particularly nice guy …" – to imagine such words is already to see many things. It might even provoke the question: Does anybody within the (Cathedral's) globalized world still think that Adolf Hitler was less evil than the Prince of Darkness himself? Perhaps only a few scattered paleo-Christians (who stubbornly insist that Satan is really, *really* bad), and an even smaller number of Neo-Nazi ultras (who think Hitler was kind of cool). For pretty much everybody else, Hitler *perfectly* personifies demonic monstrosity, transcending history and politics to attain the stature of a metaphysical absolute: evil incarnate. Beyond Hitler it is impossible to go, or think. This is surely interesting, since it indicates an irruption of the infinite within history – a religious revelation, of inverted, yet structurally familiar, Abrahamic type. ('Holocaust Theology' already implies as much.)

In this regard, rather than Satan, it might be more helpful to compare Hitler to the Antichrist, which is to say: to a mirror Messiah, of reversed moral polarity. There was even an empty tomb. *Hitlerism*, neutrally conceived, therefore, is less a pro-Nazi ideology than a universal faith, speciated within the Abrahamic super-family, and united in acknowledging the coming of pure evil on earth. Whilst not exactly worshipped (outside the extraordinarily disreputable circles already ventured into), Hitler is sacramentally abhorred, in a way that touches upon theological 'first things'. If to embrace Hitler as God is a sign of highly lamentable politico-spiritual confusion (at best), to recognize his historical singularity and sacred meaning is near-mandatory, since he is affirmed by all men of sound faith as the exact complement of the incarnate God (the revealed anti-Messiah, or Adversary), and this identification has the force of 'self-evident truth'. (Did anybody ever need to ask why the *reductio ad Hitlerum* works?)

Conveniently, like the secularized neo-puritanism that it swallows, (aversive) Hitlerism can be safely taught in American schools, at a remarkably high level of religious intensity. Insofar as progressive or programmatic history continues, this suggests that the Church of Sacred Hitlerite Abomination will eventually supplant its Abrahamic predecessors, to become the world's triumphant ecumenical faith. How could it not? After all, unlike vanilla deism, this is a faith that fully reconciles religious enthusiasm with enlightened opinion, equally adapted, with consummate amphibious capability, to the convulsive ecstasies of popular ritual and the letter pages of the *New York Times*. "Absolute evil once walked amongst us, and lives still …" How is this not, already, the principal religious message of our time? All that remains unfinished is the mythological consolidation, and that has long been underway.

There's still some bone-fragment picking to do among the ashes and debris [in Part 5], before turning to healthier things …

Part 4a: A multi-part sub-digression into racial terror

My own sense of the thing is that underneath the happy talk, underneath the dogged adherence to failed ideas and dead theories, underneath the shrieking and anathematizing at people like me, there is a deep and cold despair. In our innermost hearts, we don't believe racial harmony can be attained. Hence the trend to separation. We just want to get on with our lives away from each other. Yet for a moralistic, optimistic people like Americans, this despair is unbearable. It's pushed away somewhere we don't have to think about it. When someone forces us to think about it, we react with fury. That little boy in the Andersen story about the Emperor's new clothes? The ending would be more true to life if he had been lynched by a howling mob of outraged citizens.
— John Derbyshire, interviewed at Gawker

We believe in the equal dignity and presumption of equal decency toward every person — no matter what race, no matter what science tells us about comparative intelligence, and no matter what is to be gleaned from crime statistics. It is important that research be done, that conclusions not be rigged, and that we are at liberty to speak frankly about what it tells us. But that is not an argument for a priori conclusions about how individual persons ought to be treated in various situations — or for calculating fear or friendship based on race alone. To hold or teach otherwise is to prescribe the disintegration of a pluralistic society, to undermine the aspiration of E Pluribus Unum.
— Andrew McCarthy, defending the expulsion of JD from the National Review

"The Talk" as black Americans and liberals present it (to wit: necessitated by white malice), is a comic affront — because no one is allowed (see Barro above) to notice the context in which black Americans are having run-ins with the law, each other, and others. The proper context for understanding this, and the mania that is the Trayvonicus for that matter, is the reasonable fear of violence. This is the single most exigent fact here — yet you decree it must not be spoken.
— Dennis Dale, responding to Josh Barro's call for JD's 'firing'

Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it? That's what it is to be a slave.
— Bladerunner

There is no part of Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai, or

very many other East Asian cities where it is impossible to wander, safely, late at night. Women, whether young or old, on their own or with small children, can be comfortably oblivious to the details of space and time, at least insofar as the threat of assault is concerned. Whilst this might not be quite sufficient to define a civilized society, it comes extremely close. It is certainly *necessary* to any such definition. The contrary case is barbarism.

These lucky cities of the western Pacific Rim are typified by geographical locations and demographic profiles that conspicuously echo the embarrassingly well-behaved 'model minorities' of Occidental countries. They are (non-obnoxiously) dominated by populations that – due to biological heredity, deep cultural traditions, or some inextricable entanglement of the two – find polite, prudent, and pacific social interactions comparatively effortless, and worthy of continuous reinforcement. They are also, importantly, open, cosmopolitan societies, remarkably devoid of chauvinistic boorishness or paranoid ethno-nationalist sentiment. Their citizens are disinclined to emphasize their own virtues. On the contrary, they will typically be modest about their individual and collective attributes and achievements, abnormally sensitive to their failures and shortcomings, and constantly alert to opportunities for improvement. Complacency is almost as rare as delinquency. In these cities an entire — and massively consequential — dimension of social terror is simply absent.

In much of the Western world, in stark contrast, barbarism has been normalized. It is considered simply obvious that cities have 'bad areas' that are not merely impoverished, but lethally menacing to outsiders and residents alike. Visitors are warned to stay away, whilst locals do their best to transform their homes into fortresses, avoid venturing onto the streets after dark, and – especially if young and male — turn to criminal gangs for protection, which further degrades the security of everybody else. Predators control public space, parks are death traps, aggressive menace is celebrated as 'attitude', property acquisition is for mugs (or muggers), educational aspiration is ridiculed, and non-criminal business activity is despised as a violation of cultural norms. Every significant mechanism of socio-cultural pressure, from interpreted heritage and peer influences to political rhetoric and economic incentives, is aligned to the deepening of complacent depravity and the ruthless extirpation of every impulse to self-improvement. Quite clearly, these are places where civilization has fundamentally collapsed, and a society that includes them has to some substantial extent *failed*.

Within the most influential countries of the English-speaking

world, the disintegration of urban civilization has profoundly shaped the structure and development of cities. In many cases, the 'natural' (one might now say 'Asian') pattern, in which intensive urbanization and corresponding real estate values are greatest in the downtown core, has been shattered, or at least deeply deformed. Social disintegration of the urban center has driven an exodus of the (even moderately) prosperous to suburban and exurban refuges, producing a grotesque and historically unprecedented pattern of 'donut'-style development, with cities tolerating – or merely accommodating themselves to – ruined and rotting interiors, where sane people fear to tread. 'Inner city' has come to mean almost exactly the opposite of what an undistorted course of urban development would produce. This is the geographical expression of a Western – and especially American – social problem that is at once basically unmentionable and visible from outer space.

Surprisingly, the core-crashed donut syndrome has a notably insensitive yet commonly accepted name, which captures it in broad outlines – at least according to its secondary characteristics – and to a reasonable degree of statistical approximation: *White Flight*. This is an arresting term, for a variety of reasons. It is stamped, first of all, by the racial bi-polarity that – as a *vital archaism* – resonates with America's chronic social crisis at a number of levels. Whilst superficially outdated in an age of many-hued multicultural and immigration issues, it reverts to the undead code inherited from slavery and segregation, perpetually identified with Faulkner's words: "The past is not dead. It isn't even past." Yet even in this untypical moment of racial candor, blackness is elided, and implicitly disconnected from agency. It is denoted only by allusion, as a residue, concentrated passively and derivatively by the sifting function of a highly-adrenalized white panic. What *cannot be said* is indicated even as it is unmentioned. A distinctive silence accompanies the broken, half-expression of a mute tide of racial separatism, driven by civilizationally disabling terrors and animosities, whose depths, and structures of reciprocity, remain unavowable.

What the puritan exodus from Old to New World was to the foundation of Anglophone global modernity, white flight is to its fraying and dissolution. As with the pre-founding migration, what gives white flight ineluctable relevance here is its sub-political character: *all exit and no voice*. It is the subtle, non-argumentative, non-demanding 'other' of social democracy and its dreams – the spontaneous impulse of dark enlightenment, as it is initially glimpsed, at once disillusioning and implacable.

The core-crashed donut is not the only model of sick city syndrome (the shanty fringe phenomenon emphasized in Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums* is very different). Nor is donut-disaster urbanism reducible to racial crisis, at least in its origins. Technological factors have played a crucial role (most prominently, automobile geography) as have quite other, long-standing cultural traditions (such as the construction of suburbia as a bourgeois idyll). Yet all such lineages have been in very large measure supplanted by, or at least subordinated to, the inherited, and still emerging, 'race problem.'

So what is this 'problem'? How is it developing? Why should anybody outside America be concerned about it? Why raise the topic now (if ever)? – If your heart is sinking under the gloomy suspicion this is going to be huge, meandering, nerve-wracking, and torturous, you're right. We've got *weeks* in this chamber of horrors to look forward to.

The two simplest, quite widely held, and basically incompatible answers to the first question deserve to be considered as important *parts* of the problem.

Question: What is America's race problem?

Answer-1: Black people.

Answer-2: White people.

The combined popularity of these options is significantly expanded, most probably to encompass a large majority of all Americans, when is taken to include those who assume that one of these two answers dominates the thinking of the *other side*. Between them, the propositions "The problem would be over if we could just rid ourselves of black hoodlums / white racists" and / or "They think we're all hoodlums / racists and want to get rid of us" consume an impressive proportion of the political spectrum, establishing a solid foundation of reciprocal terror and aversion. When defensive projections are added ("We're not hoodlums, you're racists" or "We're not racists, you're hoodlums"), the potential for super-heated, non-synthesizing dialectics approaches the infinite.

Not that these 'sides' are racial (except in black or white tribal-nationalist fantasy). For crude stereotypes, it is far more useful to turn to the principal political dimension, and its categories of 'liberal' and 'conservative' in the contemporary, American sense. To identify America's race problem with white racism is the stereotypical *liberal*

position, whilst identifying it with black social dysfunction is the exact *conservative* complement. Although these stances are formally symmetrical, it is their actual political *asymmetry* that charges the American race problem with its extraordinary historical dynamism and universal significance.

That American whites and blacks – considered crudely as statistical aggregates — co-exist in a relation of reciprocal fear and perceived victimization, is attested by the manifest patterns of urban development and navigation, school choice, gun ownership, policing and incarceration, and just about every other expression of *revealed* (as opposed to *stated*) preference that is related to voluntary social distribution and security. An objective balance of terror reigns, erased from visibility by complementary yet incompatible perspectives of victimological supremacism and denial. Yet between *the liberal and conservative positions on race* there is no balance whatsoever, but something closer to a rout. Conservatives are utterly terrified of the issue, whilst for liberals it is a garden of earthly delight, whose pleasures transcend the limits of human understanding. When any political discussion firmly and clearly arrives at the topic of race, liberalism wins. That is the fundamental law of ideological effectiveness in the shadow fragrant shade of the Cathedral. In certain respects, this dynamic political imbalance is even the primary phenomenon under consideration (and much more needs to be said about it, down the road).

The regular, excruciating, soul-crushing humiliation of conservatism on the race issue should come as no surprise to anybody. After all, the principal role of conservatism in modern politics is to be humiliated. That is what a perpetual loyal opposition, or court jester, is for. The essential character of liberalism, as guardian and proponent of neo-puritan spiritual truth, invests it with supreme mastery over the dialectic, or invulnerability to contradiction. *That which it is impossible to think must necessarily be embraced through faith.* Consider only the fundamental doctrine or first article of the liberal creed, as promulgated through every public discussion, academic articulation, and legislative initiative relevant to the topic: *Race doesn't exist, except as a social construct employed by one race to exploit and oppress another.* Merely to entertain it is to shudder before the awesome majesty of the absolute, where everything is simultaneously its precise opposite, and reason evaporates ecstatically at the brink of the sublime.

If the world was built out of ideology, this story would already be over, or at least predictably programmed. Beyond the apparent zig-zag of the dialectic there is a dominant trend, heading in a single,

unambiguous direction. Yet the liberal-progressive solution to the race problem – open-endedly escalating, comprehensively systematic, dynamically paradoxical 'anti-racism' – confronts a real obstacle that is only very partially reflected in conservative attitudes, rhetoric, and ideology. The real enemy, glacial, inchoate, and non-argumentative, is 'white flight'.

At this point, explicit reference to the Derbyshire Case becomes irresistible. There is a very considerable amount of complex, recent historical context that cries out for introduction – the cultural convulsion attending the Trayvon Martin incident in particular – but there'll be time for that later (oh yes, I'm afraid so). Derbyshire's intervention, and the explosion of words it provoked, while to some extent illuminated by such context, far exceeds it. That is because the crucial unspoken term, both in Derbyshire's now-notorious short article, and also — apparently — in the responses it generated, is 'white flight'. By publishing paternal advice to his (Eurasian) children that has been — not entirely unreasonably — summarized as 'avoid black people', he converted white flight from a much-lamented but seemingly inexorable fact into an explicit imperative, even a *cause*. *Don't argue, flee.*

The word Derbyshire emphasizes, in his own penumbra of commentary, and in antecedent writings, is not 'flight' or 'panic', but *despair*. When asked by blogger Vox Day whether he agreed that the 'race card' had become less intimidating over the past two decades, Derbyshire replies:

One [factor], which I've written about more than once, I think, in the United States, is just despair. I am of a certain age, and I was around 50 years ago. I was reading the newspapers and following world events and I remember the civil rights movement. I was in England, but we followed it. I remember it, I remember what we felt about it, and what people were writing about it. It was full of hope. The idea in everyone's mind was that if we strike down these unjust laws and we outlaw all this discrimination, then we'll be whole. Then America will be made whole. After an intermediate period of a few years, who knows, maybe 20 years, with a hand up from things like affirmative action, black America will just merge into the general population and the whole thing will just go away. That's what everybody believed. Everybody thought that. And it didn't happen.

Here we are, we're 50 years later, and we've still got these tremendous disparities in crime rates, educational attainment, and so on. And I think, although they're still mouthing the platitudes, Americans in

their hearts feel a kind of cold despair about it. They feel that Thomas Jefferson was probably right and we can't live together in harmony. I think that's why you see this slow ethnic disaggregation. We have a very segregated school system now. There are schools within 10 miles of where I'm sitting that are 98 percent minority. In residential housing too, it's the same thing. So I think there is a cold, dark despair lurking in America's collective heart about the whole thing.

This is a version of reality that few want to hear. As Derbyshire recognizes, Americans are a predominantly Christian, optimistic, 'can-do' people, whose 'collective heart' is unusually maladapted to an *abandonment of hope*. This is a country culturally hard-wired to interpret despair not merely as error or weakness, but as *sin*. Nobody who understands this could be remotely surprised to find bleak hereditarian fatalism being rejected — typically with vehement hostility — not only by progressives, but also by the overwhelming majority of conservatives. At NRO, Andrew C. McCarthy no doubt spoke for many in remarking:

There is a world of difference, though, between the need to be able to discuss uncomfortable facts about IQ and incarceration, on the one hand, and, on the other, to urge race as a rationale for abandoning basic Christian charity.

Others went much further. At the Examiner, James Gibson seized upon "John Derbyshire's vile racist screed" as the opportunity to teach a wider lesson – "the danger of conservatism divorced from Christianity":

… since Derbyshire does not believe "that Jesus of Nazareth was divine … and that the Resurrection was a real event," he cannot comprehend the great mystery of the Incarnation, whereby the Divine truly did take on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and suffered death at the hands of a fallen humanity in order to redeem that humanity out of its state of fallenness.

Herein lies the danger of a conservative socio-political philosophy divorced from a robust Christian faith. It becomes a dead ideology spawning a view of humanity that is toxic, fatalistic, and (as Derbyshire proves abundantly) uncharitable.

It was, of course, on the left that the fireworks truly ignited. Elspeth Reeve at the Atlantic Wire contended that Derbyshire had clung on to his relation with the National Review because he was offering the magazine's "less enlightened readers" what they wanted:

"dated racial stereotypes." Like Gibson on the right, she was keen for people to learn a wider lesson: don't think for a minute this stops with Derbyshire. (The stunningly uncooperative comments thread to her article is worth noting.)

At Gawker, Louis Peitzman jumped the shark (in the approved direction) by describing Derbyshire's "horrifying diatribe" as the "most racist article possible," a judgment that betrays extreme historical ignorance, a sheltered life, unusual innocence, and a lack of imagination, as well as making the piece sound far more interesting than it actually is. Peitzman's commentators are impeccably liberal, and of course uniformly, utterly, shatteringly appalled (to the point of orgasm). Beyond the emoting, Peitzman doesn't offer much content, excepting only a little extra emoting – this time mild satisfaction mixed with residual rage – at the news that Derbyshire's punishment has at least begun ("a step in the right direction") with his "canning" from the *National Review*.

Joanna Schroeder (writing at something called the Good Feed Blog) sought to extend the purge beyond Derbyshire, to include anybody who had not yet erupted into sufficiently melodramatic paroxysms of indignation, starting with David Weigel at Slate (who she doesn't know "in real life, but in reading this piece, it seems you just might be a racist, pal"). "There are so many … racist, dehumanizing references to black people in Derbyshire's article that I have to just stop myself here before I recount the entire thing point by point with fuming rage," she shares. Unlike Peitzman, however, at least Schroeder has a point – the racial terror dialectic — "… propagating the idea that we should be afraid of black men, of black people in general, makes this world dangerous for innocent Americans." *Your fear makes you scary* (although apparently not with legitimate reciprocity).

As for Weigel, he gets the terror good and hard. Within hours he's back at the keyboard, apologizing for his previous insouciance, and for the fact he "never ended up saying the obvious: People, the essay was disgusting."

So what did Derbyshire actually say, where did it come from, and what does it mean to American politics (and beyond)? This sub-series will comb through the spectrum from left to right in search of suggestions, with socio-geographically manifested 'white' panic / despair as a guiding thread …

Coming next: The Liberal Ecstasy

Part 4b: Obnoxious observations

Although black families and parents of boys aren't the only ones who worry about the safety of adolescents, Tillman, Brown and other parents say raising black boys is perhaps the most stressful aspect of parenting because they're dealing with a society that is fearful and hostile toward them, simply because of the color of their skin.

"Don't believe it? Walk a day in my shoes," Brown said.

Brown said that at 14, his son is at that critical age when he's always worried about his safety because of profiling.

"I don't want to scare him or have him paint people with a broad brush, but, historically, we black males have been stigmatized as the purveyors of crime and wherever we are, we're suspect," Brown said.

Black parents who don't make that fact clear, he and others said, do it at their sons' peril.

"Any African-American parent not having that conversation is being irresponsible," Brown said. "I see this whole thing as an opportunity for us to speak frankly, openly and honestly about race relations."
— Gracie Bonds Staples (Star-Telegram)

When communities resist an influx of Section 8 housing-voucher holders from the inner city, say, they are reacting overwhelmingly to behavior. Skin color is a proxy for that behavior. If inner-city blacks behaved like Asians — cramming as much knowledge into their kids as they can possibly fit into their skulls — the lingering wariness towards lower-income blacks that many Americans unquestionably harbor would disappear. Are there irredeemable racists among Americans? To be sure. They come in all colors, and we should deplore all of them. But the issue of race in the United States is more complex than polite company is usually allowed to express.
— Heather Mac Donald (City Journal)

"Let's talk about the elephant in the room. I'm black, OK?" the woman said, declining to be identified because she anticipated backlash due to her race. She leaned in to look a reporter directly in the eyes. "There were black boys robbing houses in this neighborhood," she said. "That's why George was suspicious of Trayvon Martin."
— Chris Francescani (Reuters)

"In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of

opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics," Lenin notes, "but it requires explanations and development." That is to say: further discussion.

The sublimation (*Aufhebung*) of Marxism into Leninism is an eventuality that is best grasped crudely. By forging a revolutionary communist politics of broad application, almost entirely divorced from the mature material conditions or advanced social contradictions that had been previously anticipated, Lenin demonstrated that dialectical tension coincided, exhaustively, with its politicization (and that all reference to a 'dialectics of nature' is no more than retrospective subordination of the scientific domain to a political model). Dialectics are as real as they are made to be.

The dialectic begins with political agitation, and extends no further than its practical, antagonistic, factional and coalitional 'logic'. It is the 'superstructure' *for itself*, or against natural limitation, practically appropriating the political sphere in its broadest graspable extension as a platform for social domination. Everywhere that there is argument, there is an unresolved opportunity to rule.

The Cathedral incarnates these lessons. It has no need to espouse Leninism, or operational communist dialectics, because it recognizes nothing else. There is scarcely a fragment of the social 'superstructure' that has escaped dialectical reconstruction, through articulate antagonism, polarization, binary structuring, and reversal. Within the academy, the media, even the fine arts, political super-saturation has prevailed, identifying even the most minuscule elements of apprehension with conflictual 'social critique' and egalitarian teleology. Communism is the universal implication.

More dialectics is more politics, and more politics means 'progress' – or social migration to the left. The production of public agreement only leads in one direction, and within public disagreement, such impetus already exists in embryo. It is only in the absence of agreement *and* of publicly articulated disagreement, which is to say, in non-dialectics, non-argument, sub-political diversity, or politically uncoordinated initiative, that the 'right-wing' refuge of 'the economy' (and civil society more widely) is to be found.

When no agreement is necessary, or coercively demanded, negative (or 'libertarian') liberty is still possible, and this non-argumentative 'other' of dialectics is easily formulated (even if, in a free society, it doesn't need to be): *Do your own thing*. Quite clearly, this irresponsible and negligent imperative is *politically* intolerable. It

coincides exactly with leftist depression, retrogression, or depoliticization. Nothing cries out more urgently to be *argued against*.

At the opposite extreme lies the dialectical ecstasy of theatrical justice, in which the argumentative structure of legal proceedings is coupled with publicization through the media. Dialectical enthusiasm finds its definitive expression in a courtroom drama that combines lawyers, journalists, community activists, and other agents of the revolutionary superstructure in the production of a show trial. Social contradictions are staged, antagonistic cases articulated, and resolution institutionally expected. This is Hegel for prime-time television (and now for the Internet). It is the way that the Cathedral shares its message with the people.

Sometimes, in its impatient passion for progress, this message can trip over itself, because even though the agents of the Cathedral are *infinitely* reasonable, they are ever less sensible, often strikingly incompetent, and prone to making mistakes. This is to be expected on theological grounds. As the state becomes God, it degenerates into imbecility, on the model of the holy fool. The media-politics of the Trayvon Martin spectacle provides a pertinent example.

In the United States, as in any other large country, lots of things happen every day, exhibiting innumerable patterns of varying obscurity. For instance, on an average day, there are roughly 3,400 violent crimes, including 40 murders, 230 rapes, 1,000 robberies, and 2,100 aggravated assaults, alongside 25,000 non-violent property crimes (burglaries and thefts). Very few of these will be widely publicized, or seized upon as educational, exemplary, and representative. Even were the media not inclined towards a narrative-based selection of 'good stories', the sheer volume of incidents would compel something of the kind. Given this situation, it is all but inevitable that people will ask: *Why are they telling us this?*

Almost everything about the death of Trayvon Martin is controversial, except for media motivation. On that topic there is near unanimity. The meaning or intended message of the story of the case could scarcely have been more transparent: *White racist paranoia makes America dangerous for black people.* It would thus rehearse the dialectic of racial terror (*your fear is scary*), designed – as always — to convert America's reciprocal social nightmare into a unilateral morality play, allocating legitimate dread exclusively to one side of the country's principal racial divide. It seemed perfect. A malignantly deluded white vigilante guns down an innocent black child, justifying black fear ('the talk') whilst exposing white panic as a murderous

psychosis. This is a story of such archetypal progressive meaning that it cannot be told too many times. In fact, it was just too good to be true.

It soon became evident, however, that media selection – even when reinforced by the celebrity / 'community activist' rage-machine – hadn't sufficed to keep the story on script, and both of the main actors were drifting from their assigned roles. If progressively-endorsed stereotypes were to be even remotely preserved, vigorous editing would be required. This was especially necessary because certain evil, racist, bigoted readers of the Miami Herald were beginning to forge a narrative-wrecking mental connection between 'Trayvon Martin' and 'burglary tool'.

As for the killer, George Zimmerman, the name said it all. He was clearly going to be a hulking, pasty-faced, storm-trooper look-alike, hopefully some kind of Christian gun-nut, and maybe – if they really hit pay-dirt – a militia movement type with a history of homophobia and anti-abortion activism. He started off 'white' – for no obvious reason beyond media incompetence and narrative programming – then found himself transformed into a 'white Hispanic' (a category that seems to have been rapidly innovated on the spot), before gradually shifted through a series of ever more reality-compliant ethnic complications, culminating in the discovery of his Afro-Peruvian great grandfather.

In the heart of the Cathedral it was well into head-scratching time. Here was the great Amerikkkan defendant being prepped for his show trial, the President had pitched in emotionally on behalf of the sacred victim, and the coordinated ground game had been advanced to the simmering brink of race riots, when the message began falling apart, to such an extent that it now threatened to decay into an annoyingly irrelevant case of black-on-black violence. It was not only that George Zimmerman had black ancestry – making him simply 'black' by the left's own social constructivist standards – he had also grown up amicably among black people, with two African-American girls as "part of the household for years," had entered into joint business venture with a black partner, he was a registered Democrat, and even some kind of 'community organizer' …

So why did Martin die? Was it for carrying iced tea and a bag of Skittles while black (the media and community activist approved, 'son Obama might have had' version), for scoping out burglary targets (the Kluxer racial profiling version), or for breaking Zimmerman's nose, knocking him over, sitting on top of him, and smashing his head

repeatedly against the sidewalk (to be decided in court)? Was he a martyr to racial injustice, a low-level social predator, or a human symptom of American urban crisis? The only thing that was really clear when legal proceedings began, beyond the squalid sadness of the episode, was that it was not resolving anything.

For a sense of just how disconcertingly the approved lesson had disintegrated by the time Zimmerman was charged with second degree murder, it is only necessary to read this post by HBD-blogger oneSTDV, describing the dialectical derangements of the race-warrior right:

Despite the disturbing nature of the "charges" against Zimmerman, many in the alt-right refuse to grant Zimmerman any sympathy or to even view this as a seminal moment in modern leftism's anarcho-tyrannical reign. According to these individuals, **the Spanish-speaking, registered Democrat mestizo got what was coming to him** — the ire of the black mob and the elite left indirectly buttressed by Zimmerman himself. Due to his voting record, multicultural background, and mentoring of minority youth, they see Zimmerman as emblematic of the left's assault on white America, a sort of ground soldier in the campaign against American whiteness.[Bolding in original]

The pop PC police were ready to move on. With the great show trial collapsing into narrative disorder, it was time to refocus on the Message, facts be damned (and double damned). 'Jezebel' best exemplifies the hectoring, vaguely hysterical tone:

You know how you can tell that black people are still oppressed? Because *black people are still oppressed*. If you claim that you are not a racist person (or, at least, that you're committed to working your ass off not to be one — which is really the best that any of us can promise), then you must believe that people are fundamentally born equal. So if that's true, then in a vacuum, factors like skin color should have no effect on anyone's success. Right? And therefore, if you really believe that all people are created equal, then when you see that drastic racial inequalities exist in the real world, the only thing that you could *possibly* conclude is that some external force is holding certain people back. Like…racism. Right? So congratulations! You believe in racism! Unless you don't actually think that people are born equal. And if you don't believe that people are born equal, *then you're a f*****g racist.*

Does anyone "really believe that people are born equal," in the

way it is understood here? Believe, that is, not only that a formal expectation of equal treatment is a prerequisite for civilized interaction, but that any revealed deviation from substantial equality of outcome is an obvious, unambiguous indication of oppression? That's "the only thing you could *possibly* conclude"?

At the very least, Jezebel should be congratulated for expressing the progressive faith in its purest form, entirely uncontaminated by sensitivity to evidence or uncertainty of any kind, casually contemptuous of any relevant research – whether existent or merely conceivable – and supremely confident about its own moral invincibility. If the facts are *morally wrong*, so much worse for the facts – that's the only position that could *possibly* be adopted, even if it's based upon a mixture of wishful thinking, deliberate ignorance, and insultingly childish lies.

To call the belief in substantial human equality a superstition is to insult superstition. It might be unwarranted to believe in leprechauns, but at least the person who holds to such a belief isn't *watching them not exist*, for every waking hour of the day. Human inequality, in contrast, and in all of its abundant multiplicity, is constantly on display, as people exhibit their variations in gender, ethnicity, physical attractiveness, size and shape, strength, health, agility, charm, humor, wit, industriousness, and sociability, among countless other features, traits, abilities, and aspects of their personality, some immediately and conspicuously, some only slowly, over time. To absorb even the slightest fraction of all this and to conclude, in the only way possible, that it is either nothing at all, or a 'social construct' and index of oppression, is sheer Gnostic delirium: a commitment beyond all evidence to the existence of a true and good world veiled by appearances. People are not equal, they do not develop equally, their goals and achievements are not equal, and nothing can make them equal. Substantial equality has no relation to reality, except as its systematic negation. Violence on a genocidal scale is required to even approximate to a practical egalitarian program, and if anything less ambitious is attempted, people get around it (some more competently than others).

To take only the most obvious example, anybody with more than one child knows that *nobody is born equal* (monozygotic twins and clones perhaps excepted). *In fact*, everybody is born different, in innumerable ways. Even when – as is normally the case – the implications of these differences for life outcomes are difficult to confidently predict, their existence is undeniable, or at least: sincerely undeniable. Of course sincerity, or even minimal cognitive coherence,

is not remotely the issue here. Jezebel's position, whilst impeccable in its political correctness, is not only factually dubious, but rather laughably absurd, and actually – strictly speaking — insane. It dogmatizes a denial of reality so extreme that nobody could genuinely maintain, or even entertain it, let alone plausible explain or defend it. It is a tenet of faith that cannot be understood, but only asserted, or submitted to, as madness made law, or authoritarian religion.

The political commandment of this religion is transparent: Accept progressive social policy as the *only possible* solution to the sin problem of inequality. This commandment is a 'categorical imperative' – no possible fact could ever undermine, complicate, or revise it. If progressive social policy actually results in an exacerbation of the problem, 'fallen' reality is to blame, since the social malady is *obviously* worse than had been originally envisaged, and only redoubled efforts in the same direction can hope to remedy it. There can be nothing to learn in matters of faith. Eventually, systematic social collapse teaches the lesson that chronic failure and incremental deterioration could not communicate. (That's macro-scale social Darwinism for dummies, and it's the way that civilizations end.)

Due to it's exceptional correlation with substantial variation in social outcomes in modern societies, by far the most troublesome dimension of human bio-diversity is intelligence or general problem solving ability, quantified as IQ (measuring Spearman's 'g'). When 'statistical common sense' or profiling is applied to the proponents of Human Bio-Diversity, however, another significant trait is rapidly exposed: a remarkably consistent deficit of *agreeableness*. Indeed, it is widely accepted within the accursed 'community' itself that most of those stubborn and awkward enough to educate themselves on the topic of human biological variation are significantly 'socially retarded', with low verbal inhibition, low empathy, and low social integration, resulting in chronic maladaptation to group expectations. The typical EQs of this group can be extracted as the approximate square-root of their IQs. Mild autism is typical, sufficient to approach their fellow beings in a spirit of detached, natural-scientific curiosity, but not so advanced as to compel total cosmic disengagement. These traits, which they themselves consider – on the basis of copious technical information — to be substantially heritable, have manifest social consequences, reducing employment opportunities, incomes, and even reproductive potential. Despite all the free therapeutic advice available in the progressive environment, this obnoxiousness shows no sign of diminishing, and might even be intensifying. As Jezebel shows so clearly, this can only *possibly* be a sign of structural oppression. Why can't obnoxious people get a break?

The history is damning. ‘Sociables’ have always had it in for the obnoxious, often declining to marry or do business with them, excluding them from group activities and political office, labeling them with slurs, ostracizing and avoiding them. ‘Obnoxiousness’ has been stigmatized and stereotyped in extremely negative terms, to such an extent that many of the obnoxious have sought out more sensitive labels, such as ‘socially-challenged’, or ‘differently socially abled’. Not uncommonly, people have been verbally or even physically assaulted for no other reason than their radical obnoxiousness. Most tragically of all, due to their complete inability to get on with one another, the obnoxious have never been able to politically mobilize against the structural social oppression they face, or to enter into coalitions with their natural allies, such as cynics, debunkers, contrarians, and Tourette Syndrome sufferers. Obnoxiousness has yet to be liberated, although it’s probable that the Internet will ‘help’ …

Consider John Derbyshire’s essay in infamy The Talk: Nonblack Version, focusing initially on its relentless obnoxiousness, and attentive to the negative correlation between sociability and objective reason. As Derbyshire notes elsewhere, people are generally incapable of differentiating themselves from group identities, or properly applying statistical generalizations about groups to individual cases, including their own. A rationally indefensible, but socially inevitable, reification of group profiles is psychologically normal – even ‘human’ – with the result that noisy, non-specific, statistical information is erroneously accepted as a contribution to self-understanding, even when specific information is available.

From the perspective of socially autistic, low-EQ, rational analysis, this is simply *mistaken*. If an individual has certain characteristics, the fact of belonging to a group that has similar or dissimilar average characteristics is of no relevance whatsoever. Direct and determinate information about the individual is not to any degree enriched by indirect and indeterminate (probabilistic) information about the groups to which the individual belongs. If an individual’s test results are known, for instance, no additional insight is provided by statistical inferences about the test results that *might have been expected* based on group profiling. An Ashkenazi Jewish moron is no less moronic because he is an Ashkenazi Jew. Elderly Chinese nuns are unlikely to be murderers, but a murderer who happens to be an elderly Chinese nun is neither more nor less murderous than one who is not. This is all extremely obvious, to obnoxious people.

To normal people, however, it is not obvious at all. In part this is because rational intelligence is scarce and abnormal among humans,

and in part because social 'intelligence' works with what everyone else is thinking, which is to say, with irrational groupish sentiment, meager information, prejudices, stereotypes, and heuristics. Since (almost) everybody else is taking short-cuts, or 'economizing' on reason, it is only rational to react defensively to generalizations that are likely to be reified or inappropriately applied — over-riding or substituting for specific perceptions. Anybody who anticipates being pre-defined through a group identity has an expanded ego-investment in that group and the way it is perceived. A generic assessment, however objectively arrived at, will immediately become personal, under (even quite remotely) normal conditions.

Obnoxious reason can stubbornly insist that *anything average cannot be about you*, but the message will not be generally received. Human social 'intelligence' is not built that way. Even supposedly sophisticated commentators blunder repeatedly into the most jarring exhibitions of basic statistical incomprehension without the slightest embarrassment, because embarrassment was designed for something else (and for almost exactly the opposite). The failure to understand stereotypes in their scientific, or probabilistic application, is a functional prerequisite of sociability, since the sole alternative to idiocy in this respect is obnoxiousness.

Derbyshire's article is noteworthy because it succeeds in being *definitively obnoxious*, and has been recognized as such, despite the spluttering incoherence of most rejoinders. Among the things that 'the talk' and 'the counter-talk' share is a theatrical structure of *pseudo-private conversation designed to be overheard*. In both cases, a message that parents are compelled to deliver to their children is staged as the vehicle for a wider social lesson, aimed at those who, through action or inaction, have created a world that is intolerably hazardous to them.

This form is intrinsically manipulative, making even the 'original' talk a tempting target of parody. In the original, however, a tone of anguished sincerity is engineered through a deliberate performance of innocence (or ignorance). Listen son, I know this will be difficult to understand … (*Oh why, oh why are they doing this to us?*). The counter-talk, in stark contrast, melds its micro-social drama with the clinically non-sociable discourse of "methodical inquiries in the human sciences" – treating populations as fuzzy bio-geographical units with quantifiable characteristics, rather than as legal-political subjects in communication. It derides innocence, and – by implication – the criterion of sociability itself. Agreement, agreeableness, count for nothing. The rigorously and redundantly compiled statistics say what

they say, and if we cannot live with that, so much the worse for us.

Yet even to a reasonably sympathetic, or scrupulously obnoxious, reading, Derbyshire's article provides grounds for criticism. For instance, and from the beginning, it is notable that the racial reciprocal of "nonblack Americans" is 'black Americans', not "American blacks" (the term Derbyshire selects). This reversal of word order, switching nouns and adjectives, quickly settles into a pattern. Does it matter that Derbyshire requests the extension of civility to any "individual black" (rather than to 'black individuals')? It certainly makes a difference. To say that someone is 'black' is to say something about them, but to say that someone is 'a black' is to say who they are. The effect is subtly, yet distinctly, menacing, and Derbyshire is too well-trained, algebraically, to be excused from noticing it. After all, 'John Derbyshire is a white' sounds equally off, as does any analogous formulation, submerging the individual in the genus, to be retrieved as a mere instance, or example.

The more intellectually substantive aspect of this over-reach into gratuitous incivility have been examined by William Saletan and Noah Millman, who make very similar points, from the two sides of the liberal / conservative divide. Both writers identify a fissure or methodical incongruity in Derbyshire's article, stemming from its commitment to the micro-social application of macro-social statistical generalizations. Stereotypes, however rigorously confirmed, are *essentially* inferior to specific knowledge in any concrete social situation, because nobody ever encounters a population.

As a liberal of problematic standing, Saletan has no choice but to recoil melodramatically from Derbyshire's "stomach-turning conclusions," but his reasons for doing so are not consumed by his gastro-emotional crisis. "But what exactly is a statistical truth?" he asks. "It's a probability estimate you might fall back on if you know nothing about [a particular individual]. It's an ignorant person's weak substitute for knowledge." Derbyshire, with his Aspergery attention to the absence of black Fields Medal winners, is "…a math nerd who substitutes statistical intelligence for social intelligence. He recommends group calculations instead of taking the trouble to learn about the person standing in front of you."

Millman emphasizes the ironic reversal that switches (obnoxious) social scientific knowledge into imperative ignorance:

The "race realists" like to say that they are the ones who are curious about the world, and the "politically correct" types are the ones who

prefer to ignore ugly reality. But the advice Derbyshire gives to his children encourages them not to be too curious about the world around them, for fear of getting hurt. And, as a general rule, that's terrible advice for kids – and not the advice that Derbyshire has followed in his own life.

Millman's conclusion is also instructive:

So why am I arguing with Derb at all? Well, because he's a friend. And because even lazy, socially-irresponsible talk deserves to be refuted, not merely denounced. Is Derbyshire's piece racist? *Of course it's racist.* His whole point is that it is both rational and morally right for his children to treat black people significantly differently from white people, and to fear them. But "racist" is a descriptive term, not a moral one. The "race realist" crowd is strongly convinced of the accuracy of Derbyshire's major premises, and they are not going to be argued out of that conviction by the assertion such conviction is "racist" – nor, honestly, should they be. For that reason, I feel it's important to argue that Derbyshire's conclusions do not follow simply from those premises, and are, in fact, morally incorrect even if those premises are granted for the sake of argument.

[Brief intermission …]

Part 4c: The Cracker Factory

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men — yes, black men as well as white men — would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked "insufficient funds."
— Martin Luther King Jr.

Conservatism … is a white people's movement, a scattering of outliers notwithstanding.
Always has been, always will be. I have attended at least a hundred conservative gatherings, conferences, cruises, and jamborees: let me tell you, there ain't too many raisins in that bun. I was in and out of the National Review offices for twelve years, and the only black person I saw there, other than when Herman Cain came calling, was Alex, the guy who

runs the mail room. (Hey, Alex!)
This isn't because conservatism is hostile to blacks and mestizos. Very much the contrary, especially in the case of Conservatism Inc. They fawn over the occasional nonwhite with a puppyish deference that fairly fogs the air with embarrassment. (Q: What do you call the one black guy at a gathering of 1,000 Republicans? A: "Mr. Chairman.")
It's just that conservative ideals like self-sufficiency and minimal dependence on government have no appeal to underperforming minorities — groups who, in the statistical generality, are short of the attributes that make for group success in a modern commercial nation.
Of what use would it be to them to embrace such ideals? They would end up even more decisively pooled at the bottom of society than they are currently.
A much better strategy for them is to ally with as many disaffected white and Asian subgroups as they can (homosexuals, feminists, dead-end labor unions), attain electoral majorities, and institute big redistributionist governments to give them make-work jobs and transfer wealth to them from successful groups.
Which is what, very rationally and sensibly, they do.
— John Derbyshire

Neo-secessionists are all around us… and free speech gives them a cozy blanket of protection. Rick Perry insinuating Texas could secede rather than adhere to the federal healthcare law, Todd Palin belonging to a political association advocating Alaskan secession, and Sharron Angle talking about 'second amendment remedies' to handle disputes with federal authorities are all examples of dangerous secessionist rhetoric permeating through modern discourse. The media focuses our attention at Civil War reenactors and pick-up trucks with Confederate flags flying on them. But public figures are influenced as well, by academics who struggle to perpetuate a most dangerous brand of revisionism.
— Practically Historical

African-Americans are the conscience of our country.
— commenter 'surfed' at Walter Russell Mead's blog (edited for spelling)

America's racial 'original sin' was foundational, dating back before the birth of the United States to the clearing of aboriginal peoples by European settlers, and – still more saliently – to the institution of chattel slavery. This is the Old Testament history of American black-white relations, set down in a providential narrative of escape from bondage, in which factual documentation and moral exhortation are indissolubly fused. The combination of prolonged and intense social abuse in a pattern set by the Torah, recapitulating the primordial

moral-political myth of the Western tradition, has installed the story of slavery and emancipation as the unsurpassable frame of the American historical experience: *let my people go*.

'Practically Historical' (cited above), quotes Lincoln on the Civil War:

Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

The New Testament of race in America was written in the 1960s, revising and specifying the template. The combination of the Civil Rights Movement, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, and the Republican Southern Strategy (appealing to disaffected whites in the states of the old Confederacy) forged a partisan identification between Blacks and the Democratic Party that amounted to a liberal-progressive rebirth, setting the terms for partisan racial polarization that have endured – and even strengthened – over subsequent decades. For a progressive movement compromised by a history of systematic eugenicist racism, and a Democratic Party traditionally aligned with white southern obduracy and the Ku Klux Klan, the civil rights era presented an opportunity for atonement, ritual purification, and redemption.

Reciprocally, for American conservatism (and its increasingly directionless Republican Party vehicle), this progression spelt protracted death, for reasons that continue to elude it. The Idea of America was now inextricable from a vehement renunciation of the past, and even of the present, insofar as the past still shaped it. Only an 'ever more perfect union' could conform to it. At the most superficial level, the broad partisan implications of the new order were unmistakable in a country that was becoming ever more democratic, and ever less republican, with effective sovereignty nationally concentrated in the executive, and the moral urgency of activist government installed as a principle of faith. For what had already become the 'Old Right' there was no way out, or back, because the path backwards crossed the event horizon of the civil rights movement, into tracts of political impossibility whose ultimate meaning was slavery.

The left thrives on dialectics, the right perishes through them.

Insofar as there is a pure logic of politics, it is that. One immediate consequence (repeatedly emphasized by Mencius Moldbug) is that progressivism has no enemies to the left. It recognizes only idealists, whose time has not yet come. Factional conflicts on the left are politically dynamic, celebrated for their motive potential. Conservatism, in contrast, is caught between a rock and a hard place: bludgeoned from the left by the juggernaut of post-constitutional statism, and agitated from 'the right' by inchoate tendencies which are both unassimilable (to the mainstream) and often mutually incompatible, ranging from extreme (Austro-libertarian) varieties of *laissez-faire* capitalist advocacy to strains of obstinate, theologically-grounded social traditionalism, ultra-nationalism, or white identity politics.

'The right' has no unity, actual or prospective, and thus has no definition symmetrical to that of the left. It is for this reason that political dialectics (a tautology) ratchets only in one direction, predictably, towards state expansion and an increasingly coercive substantial-egalitarian ideal. The right moves to the center, and the center moves to the left.

Regardless of mainstream conservative fantasies, liberal-progressive mastery of American providence has become uncontestable, dominated by a racial dialectic that absorbs unlimited contradiction, whilst positioning the Afro-American underclass as the incarnate critique of the existing social order, the criterion of emancipation, and the sole path to collective salvation. No alternative structure of historical intelligibility is politically tolerable, or even – strictly speaking – imaginable, since resistance to the narrative is un-American, anti-social, and (of course) racist, serving only to confirm the existence of systematic racial oppression through the symbolic violence manifested in its negation. To argue against it is already to prove it correct, by concretely demonstrating the same benighted forces of social retardation that are being verbally denied. By resisting the demand for orchestrated social re-education, knuckle-dragging 'bitter clingers' only show how much there still is to do.

At its most abstract and all-encompassing, the liberal-progressive racial dialectic abolishes its outside, along with any possibility of principled consistency. It asserts — at one and the same time — that race does not exist, and that its socially-constructed pseudo-existence is an instrument of inter-racial violence. Racial recognition is both mandatory, and forbidden. Racial identities are meticulously catalogued for purposes of social remedy, hate crime detection, and disparate impact studies, targeting groups for 'positive discrimination',

‘affirmative action’, or ‘diversity promotion’ (to list these terms in their rough order of historical substitution), even as they are denounced as meaningless (by the United Nations, no less), and dismissed as malicious stereotypes, corresponding to nothing real. Extreme racial sensitivity and absolute racial desensitization are demanded simultaneously. Race is everything and nothing. There is no way out.

Conservatism is dialectically incompetent by definition, and so abjectly clueless that it imagines itself being able to exploit these contradictions, or – in its deluded formulation – *liberal cognitive dissonance*. The conservatives who triumphantly point out such inconsistencies seem never to have skimmed the output of a contemporary humanities program, in which thick rafts of internally conflicted victimage are lovingly woven out of incompatible grievances, in order to exult in the radical progressive promise of their discordant lamentations. Inconsistency is fuel for the Cathedral, demanding activist argumentation, and ever heightened realizations of unity. *Integrative public debate always moves things to the left* — that might not seem an especially difficult point to grasp, but to understand it is to expose the fundamental futility of mainstream conservatism, and that is in almost nobody’s interest, so it will not be understood.

Conservatism is incapable of working dialectics, or simultaneous contradiction, but that does not prevent it from serving progress (on the contrary). Rather than celebrating the power of inconsistency, it stumbles through contradictions, decompressed, in succession, in the manner of a fossil exhibition, and a foil. After “standing athwart history, yelling ‘Stop!’ ” during the Civil Rights Era, and thus banishing itself eternally to racial damnation, the conservative (and Republican) mainstream reversed course, seizing upon Martin Luther King Jr. as an integral part of its canon, and seeking to harmonize itself with “a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.”

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of

oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Captivated by King's appeal to constitutional and biblical traditionalism, by his rejection of political violence, and by his uninhibited paeans to freedom, American conservatism gradually came to identify with his dream of racial reconciliation and race blindness, and to accept it as the true, providential meaning of its own most sacred documents. At least, this became the mainstream, public, conservative orthodoxy, even though it was consolidated far too late to neutralize suspicions of insincerity, failed almost entirely to convince the black demographic itself, and would remain open to escalating derision from the left for its empty formalism.

So compelling was King's restatement of the American Creed that, retrospectively, its triumph over the political mainstream seems simply inevitable. The further American conservatism departed from the Masonic rationalism of the founders, in the direction of biblical religiosity, the more indistinguishable its faith became from a Black American experience, mythically articulated through Exodus, in which the basic framework of history was an escape from bondage, borne towards a future in which "all of God's children — black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics — will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!' "

The genius of King's message lay in its extraordinary power of integration. The flight of the Hebrews from Egypt, the American War of Independence, the abolition of chattel slavery in the wake of the American Civil War, and the aspirations of the civil rights era were mythically compressed into a single archetypal episode, perfectly consonant with the American Creed, and driven forwards not only by irresistible moral force, but even by divine decree. The measure of this integrative genius, however, is the complexity it masters. A century after the "joyous daybreak" of emancipation from slavery, King declares, "the Negro still is not free."

One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society

and finds himself an exile in his own land.

The story of *Exodus* is exit, the War of Independence is exit, and the emancipation from slavery is exit, especially when this is exemplified by the Underground Railroad and the model of self-liberation, escape, or flight. To be 'manacled' by segregation, 'chained' by discrimination, trapped on a 'lonely island of poverty', or 'exiled' in one's 'own land', in contrast, has no relation to *exit* whatsoever, beyond that which spell-binding metaphor can achieve. There is no *exit* into social integration and acceptance, equitably distributed prosperity, public participation, or assimilation, but only an aspiration, or a dream, hostage to fact and fortune. As the left and the reactionary right were equally quick to notice, insofar as this dream ventures significantly beyond a right to formal equality and into the realm of substantial political remedy, it is one that the right has no right to.

In the immediate wake of the John Derbyshire affair, Jessica Valenti at *The Nation* blog makes the point clearly:

… this isn't just about who has written what — it's about the intensely racist policies that are par for the conservative course. Some people would like to believe that racism is just the explicit, said-out-loud discrimination and hatred that is easily identifiable. It's not — it's also pushing xenophobic policies and supporting systemic inequality. After all, what's more impactful — a singular racist like Derbyshire or Arizona's immigration law? A column or voter suppression? Getting rid of one racist from one publication doesn't change the fact that the conservative agenda is one that disproportionately punishes and discriminates against people of color. So, I'm sorry, folks — you don't get to support structural inequality and then give yourself a pat on the back for not being overtly racist.

The 'conservative agenda' cannot ever be dreamy (hopeful and inconsistent) enough to escape accusations of racism – that's intrinsic to the way the racial dialectic works. Policies broadly compatible with capitalistic development, oriented to the rewarding of low time-preference, and thus punishing impulsivity, will reliably have a disparate impact upon the least economically functional social groups. Of course, the dialectic demands that the racial aspect of this disparate impact can and must be strongly emphasized (for the purpose of condemning incentives to human capital formation as racist), and at the same time forcefully denied (in order to denounce *exactly the same observation* as racist stereotyping). Anyone who expects conservatives to navigate this double-bind with political agility and grace must

somehow have missed the late 20th century. For instance, the doomed loser idiots conservatives at the *Washington Examiner*, noticing with alarm that:

House Democrats received training this week on how to address the issue of race to defend government programs … The prepared content of a Tuesday presentation to the House Democratic Caucus and staff indicates that Democrats will seek to portray apparently neutral free-market rhetoric as being charged with racial bias, conscious or unconscious.

There are no alternative versions of an ever more perfect union, because union is the alternative to alternatives. Searching for where the alternatives might once have been found, where liberty still meant *exit*, and where dialectics were dissolved in space, leads into a clown-house of horrors, fabricated as the shadow, or significant other, of the Cathedral. Since the right never had a unity of its own, it was given one. Call it the Cracker Factory.

When James C. Bennett, in *The Anglosphere Challenge*, sought to identify the principal cultural characteristics of the English-speaking world, the resulting list was generally familiar. It included, besides the language itself, common law traditions, individualism, comparatively high-levels of economic and technological openness, and distinctively emphatic reservations about centralized political power. Perhaps the most striking feature, however, was a marked cultural tendency to settle disagreements in space, rather than time, opting for territorial schism, separatism, independence, and flight, in place of revolutionary transformation within an integrated territory. When Anglophones disagree, they have often sought to dissociate in space. Instead of an integral resolution (regime change), they pursue a plural irresolution (through regime division), proliferating polities, localizing power, and diversifying systems of government. Even in its present, highly attenuated form, this anti-dialectical, de-synthesizing predisposition to social disaggregation finds expression in a stubborn, sussurous hostility to globalist political projects, and in a vestigial attraction to federalism (in its fissional sense).

Splitting, or fleeing, is all *exit*, and (non-recuperable) anti-dialectics. It is the basic well-spring of liberty within the Anglophone tradition. If the function of a Cracker Factory is to block off all the exits, there's only one place to build it – right here.

Like Hell, or Auschwitz, the Cracker Factory has a simple slogan inscribed upon its gate: *Escape is racist*. That is why the expression

'white flight' – which says exactly the same thing – has never been denounced for its political incorrectness, despite the fact that it draws upon an ethnic statistical generalization of the kind that would, in any other case, provoke paroxysms of outrage. 'White flight' is no more 'white' than low time-preference is, but this broad-brush insensitivity is deemed acceptable, because it structurally supports the Cracker Factory, and the indispensable confusion of ancient (or negative) liberty with original (racial) sin.

You absolutely, definitely, mustn't go there … so, of course, we will … [next]

Part 4d: Odd Marriages

The origins of the word 'cracker' as a term of ethnic derision are distant and obscure. It seems to have already circulated, as a slur targeting poor southern whites of predominantly Celtic ancestry, in the mid-18th century, derived perhaps from 'corn-cracker' or the Scots-Irish 'crack' (banter). The rich semantic complexion of the term, inextricable from the identification of elaborate racial, cultural, and class characteristics, is comparable to that of its unmentionable dusky cousin – "the 'N-' word" – and draws from the same well of generally recognized but forbidden truths. In particular, and emphatically, it testifies to the *illicit truism* that people are more excited and animated by their differences than by their commonalities, 'clinging bitterly' – or at least tenaciously – to their non-uniformity, and obstinately resisting the universal categories of enlightened population management. Crackers are grit in the clockwork of progress.

The most delectable features of the slur, however, are entirely fortuitous (or Qabbalistic). 'Crackers' break codes, safes, organic chemicals – sealed or bonded systems of all kinds – with eventual geopolitical implication. They anticipate a *crack-up*, schism or secession, confirming their association with the anathematized disintegrative undercurrent of Anglophone history. No surprise, then – despite the linguistic jumps and glitching – that the figure of the recalcitrant cracker evokes a still-unpacified South, insubordinate to the manifest destiny of Union. This returns it, by short-circuit, to the most problematic depths of its meaning.

Contradictions demand resolution, but *cracks* can continue to widen, deepen, and spread. According to the cracker ethos, when things can fall apart – it's OK. There's no need to reach agreement, when it's possible to split. This *cussedness*, pursued to its limit, tends to a hill-billy stereotype set in a shack or rusting trailer at the end of an

Appalachian mountain path, where all economic transactions are conducted in cash (or moonshine), interactions with government agents are conducted across the barrel of a loaded shotgun, and timeless anti-political wisdom is summed in the don't-tread-on-me reflex: "Get off my porch." Naturally, this disdain for integrative debate (dialectics) is coded within the mainstream of Anglocentric global history – which is to say, Yankee evangelical Puritanism – as a deficiency not only of cultural sophistication, but also of basic intelligence, and even the most scrupulous adherent of social constructivist righteousness immediately reverts to hard-hereditarian psychometrics when confronted by cracker obstreperousness. To those for whom a broad trend of socio-political progress seems like a simple, incontestable fact, the refusal to recognize anything of the kind is perceived as clear evidence of retardation.

Since stereotypes generally have high statistical truth-value, it's more than possible that crackers are clustered heavily on the left of the white IQ bell-curve, concentrated there by generations of dysgenic pressure. If, as Charles Murray argues, the efficiency of meritocratic selection within American society has steadily risen and conspired with assortative mating to transform class differences into genetic castes, it would be passing strange if the cracker stratum were to be characterized by conspicuous cognitive elevation. Yet some awkwardly intriguing questions intervene at this point, as long as one diligently pursues the stereotype. Assortative mating? How can that work, when crackers marry their cousins? Oh yes, there's *that*. Drawing on population groups beyond the north-western Hajnal Line, traditional cracker kinship patterns are notably atypical of the exogamous Anglo (WASP) norm.

The tireless 'hbdchick' is the crucial resource on this topic. Over the course of a truly monumental series of blog posts, she employs Hamiltonian conceptual tools to investigate the borderland where nature and culture intersect, comprising kinship structures, the differentiations they require in the calculus of inclusive fitness, and the distinctive ethnic profiles in the evolutionary psychology of altruism that result. In particular, she directs attention to the abnormality of (North-West) European history, where obligatory exogamy – through rigorous proscription of cousin marriage – has prevailed for 1,600 years. This distinctive orientation towards outbreeding, she suggests, plausibly accounts for a variety of bio-cultural peculiarities, the most historically significant of which is a unique pre-eminence of reciprocal (over familial) altruism, as indicated by emphatic individualism, nuclear families, an affinity with 'corporate' (kinship-free) institutions, highly-developed contractual

relationships among strangers, relatively low levels of nepotism / corruption, and robust forms of social cohesion independent of tribal bonds.

Inbreeding, in contrast, creates a selective environment favoring tribal collectivism, extended systems of family loyalty and honor, distrust of non-relatives and impersonal institutions, and – in general – those 'clannish' traits which mesh uncomfortably with the leading values of (Eurocentric) modernity, and are thus denounced for their primitive 'xenophobia' and 'corruption'. Clannish values, of course, are bred in clans, such as those populating Britain's Celtic fringe and borderlands, where cousin marriage persisted, along with its associated socio-economic and cultural forms, especially herding (rather than farming), and a disposition towards extreme, vendetta-style violence.

This analysis introduces the central paradox of 'white identity', since the specifically European ethnic traits that have structured the moral order of modernity, slanting it away from tribalism and towards reciprocal altruism, are inseparable from a unique heritage of outbreeding that is intrinsically corrosive of ethnocentric solidarity. In other words: it is almost exactly weak ethnic groupishness that makes a group ethnically modernistic, competent at 'corporate' (non-familial) institution building, and thus objectively privileged / advantaged within the dynamic of modernity.

This paradox is most fully expressed in the radical forms of European ethnocentric revivalism exemplified by paleo- and neo-Nazism, confounding its proponents and antagonists alike. When exceptionally advanced 'race-treachery' is your quintessential racial feature, the opportunity for viable ethno-supremacist politics disappears into a logical abyss – even if occasions for large-scale trouble-making no doubt remain. Admittedly, a Nazi, by definition, is willing (and eager) to sacrifice modernity upon the altar of racial purity, but this is either not to understand, or to tragically affirm, the inevitable consequence – which is to be out-modernized (and thus defeated). Identity politics is for losers, inherently and unalterably, due to an essentially parasitical character that only works from the left. Because inbreeding systematically contra-indicates for modern power, racial *Übermenschen* make no real sense.

In any case, however endlessly fascinating Nazis may be, they are not any kind of reliable key to the history or direction of cracker culture, beyond setting a logical limit to the programmatic construction and usage of white identity politics. Tattooing swastikas

on their foreheads does nothing to change that. (Hatfields vs McCoys is more Pushtun than Teuton.)

The conjunction taking place in the Cracker Factory is quite different, and far more perplexing, entangling the urbane, cosmopolitan advocates of hyper-contractarian marketization with romantic traditionalists, ethno-particularists, and nostalgics of the 'Lost Cause'. It is first necessary to understand this entanglement in its full, mind-melting weirdness, before exploring its lessons. For that, some semi-random stripped-down data-points might be helpful:

- The Mises Institute was founded in Auburn, Alabama.
- Ron Paul newsletters from the 1980s contain remarks of a decidedly Derbyshirean hue.
- Derbyshire hearts Ron Paul.
- Murray Rothbard has written in defense of HBD.
- lewrockwell.com contributors include Thomas J. DiLorenzo and Thomas Woods.
- Tom Palmer doesn't heart Lew Rockwell or Hans-Hermann Hoppe because "Together They Have Opened the Gates of Hell and Welcomed the Most Extreme Right-Wing Racists, Nationalists, and Assorted Cranks"
- Libertarians / constitutionalists account for 20% of the SPLC 'Radical Right' watch list (Chuck Baldwin, Michael Boldin, Tom DeWeese, Alex Jones, Cliff Kincaid, and Elmer Stewart Rhodes)

… perhaps that's enough to be going on with (although there's plenty more within easy reach). These points have been selected, questionably, crudely, and prejudicially, to lend impressionistic support to a single basic thesis: *fundamental socio-historical forces are crackerizing libertarianism*.

If the tentative research conclusions drawn by hbdchick are accepted as a frame, the oddity of this marriage between libertarian and neo-confederate themes is immediately apparent. When positioned on a bio-cultural axis, defined by degrees of outbreeding, the absence of overlap – or even proximity – is dramatically exposed. One pole is occupied by a radically individualistic doctrine, focused near-exclusively upon mutable networks of voluntary interchange of an economic type (and notoriously insensitive to the very existence of non-negotiable social bonds). Close to the other pole lies a rich culture of local attachment, extended family, honor, contempt for commercial values, and distrust of strangers. The distilled rationality of fluid capitalism is juxtaposed to traditional hierarchy and non-alienable value. The absolute prioritization of *exit* is jumbled amongst folkways

from which no exit is even imaginable.

Stapling the two together, however, is a simple, ever more irresistible conclusion: liberty has no future in the Anglophone world outside the prospect of secession. The coming crack-up is the only way out.

Part 4e: Cross-coded history

Democracy is the opposite of freedom, almost inherent to the democratic process is that it tends towards less liberty instead of more, and democracy is not something to be fixed. Democracy is inherently broken, just like socialism. The only way to fix it is to break it up.
—Frank Karsten

Historian (mainly of science) Doug Fosnow called for the USA's "red" counties to secede from the "blue" ones, forming a new federation. This was greeted with much skepticism by the audience, who noted that the "red" federation would get practically no seacoast. Did Doug really think such a secession was likely to happen? No, he admitted cheerfully, but anything would be better than the race war he does think is likely to happen, and it is intellectuals' duty to come up with less horrific possibilities.
– John Derbyshire

Thus, rather than by means of a top-down reform, under the current conditions, one's strategy must be one of a bottom-up revolution. At first, the realization of this insight would seem to make the task of a liberal-libertarian social revolution impossible, for does this not imply that one would have to persuade a majority of the public to vote for the abolition of democracy and an end to all taxes and legislation? And is this not sheer fantasy, given that the masses are always dull and indolent, and even more so given that democracy, as explained above, promotes moral and intellectual degeneration? How in the world can anyone expect that a majority of an increasingly degenerate people accustomed to the "right" to vote should ever voluntarily renounce the opportunity of looting other people's property? Put this way, one must admit that the prospect of a social revolution must indeed be regarded as virtually nil. Rather, it is only on second thought, upon regarding secession as an integral part of any bottom-up strategy, that the task of a liberal-libertarian revolution appears less than impossible, even if it still remains a daunting one.
– Hans-Hermann Hoppe

Conceived generically, modernity is a social condition defined by an integral trend, summarized as sustained economic growth rates

that exceed population increases, and thus mark an escape from normal history, caged within the Malthusian trap. When, in the interest of dispassionate appraisal, analysis is restricted to the terms of this basic quantitative pattern, it supports sub-division into the (growth) positive and negative components of the trend: techno-industrial (scientific and commercial) contributions to accelerating development on the one hand, and socio-political counter-tendencies towards the capture of economic product by democratically empowered rent-seeking special interests on the other (demosclerosis). What classical liberalism gives (industrial revolution) mature liberalism takes away (via the cancerous entitlement state). In abstract geometry, it describes an S-curve of self-limiting runaway. As a drama of liberation, it is a broken promise.

Conceived particularly, as a singularity, or real *thing*, modernity has ethno-geographical characteristics that complicate and qualify its mathematical purity. It came from somewhere, imposed itself more widely, and brought the world's various peoples into an extraordinary range of novel relations. These relations were characteristically 'modern' if they involved an overflowing of previous Malthusian limits, enabling capital accumulation, and initiating new demographic trends, but they conjoined concrete groups rather than abstract economic functions. At least in appearance, therefore, modernity was something done by people of a certain kind with, and not uncommonly to (or even against), other people, who were conspicuously unlike them. By the time it was faltering on the fading slope of the S-curve, in the early 20th century, resistance to its generic features ('capitalistic alienation') had become almost entirely indistinguishable from opposition to its particularity ('European imperialism' and 'white supremacy'). As an inevitable consequence, the modernistic self-consciousness of the system's ethno-geographical core slid towards racial panic, in a process that was only arrested by the rise and immolation of the Third Reich.

Given modernity's inherent trend to degeneration or self-cancellation, three broad prospects open. These are not strictly exclusive, and are therefore not true alternatives, but for schematic purposes it is helpful to present them as such.

(1) Modernity 2.0. Global modernization is re-invigorated from a new ethno-geographical core, liberated from the degenerate structures of its Eurocentric predecessor, but no doubt confronting long range trends of an equally mortuary character. This is by far the most encouraging and plausible scenario (from a pro-modernist perspective), and if China remains even approximately on its current

track it will be assuredly realized. (India, sadly, seems to be too far gone in its native version of demosclerosis to seriously compete.)

(2) Postmodernity. Amounting essentially to a new dark age, in which Malthusian limits brutally re-impose themselves, this scenario assumes that Modernity 1.0 has so radically globalized its own morbidity that the entire future of the world collapses around it. If the Cathedral 'wins' this is what we have coming.

(3) Western Renaissance. To be reborn it is first necessary to die, so the harder the 'hard reboot' the better. Comprehensive crisis and disintegration offers the best odds (most realistically as a sub-theme of option #1).

Because competition is good, a pinch of Western Renaissance would spice things up, even if – as is overwhelmingly probable — Modernity 2.0 is the world's principal highway to the future. That depends upon the West stopping and reversing pretty much everything it has been doing for over a century, excepting only scientific, technological, and business innovation. It is advisable to maintain rhetorical discipline within a strictly hypothetical mode, because the possibility of any of these things is deeply colored by incredibility:

(1) Replacement of representational democracy by constitutional republicanism (or still more extreme anti-political governmental mechanisms).

(2) Massive downsizing of government and its rigorous confinement to core functions (at most).

(3) Restoration of hard money (precious metal coins and bullion deposit notes) and abolition of central banking.

(4) Dismantling of state monetary and fiscal discretion, thus abolishing practical macroeconomics and liberating the autonomous (or 'catallactic') economy. (This point is redundant, since it follows rigorously from 2 & 3 above, but it's the real prize, so worth emphasizing.)

There's more – which is to say, less politics – but it's already absolutely clear that none of this is going to happen short of an existential civilizational cataclysm. Asking politicians to limit their own powers is a non-starter, but nothing less heads even remotely in the right direction. This, however, isn't even the widest or deepest problem.

Democracy might begin as a defensible procedural mechanism for limiting government power, but it quickly and inexorably develops into something quite different: a culture of systematic thievery. As soon as politicians have learnt to buy political support from the 'public purse', and conditioned electorates to embrace looting and bribery, the democratic process reduces itself to the formation of (Mancur Olson's) 'distributional coalitions' – electoral majorities mortared together by common interest in a collectively advantageous pattern of theft. Worse still, since people are, on average, not very bright, the scale of depredation available to the political establishment far exceeds even the demented sacking that is open to public scrutiny. Looting the future, through currency debauchment, debt accumulation, growth destruction, and techno-industrial retardation is especially easy to conceal, and thus reliably popular. Democracy is essentially tragic because it provides the populace with a weapon to destroy itself, one that is always eagerly seized, and used. Nobody ever says 'no' to free stuff. Scarcely anybody even sees that there is no free stuff. Utter cultural ruination is the necessary conclusion.

Within the final phase of Modernity 1.0, American history becomes the master narrative of the world. It is there that the great Abrahamic cultural conveyor culminates in the secularized neo-puritanism of the Cathedral, as it establishes the New Jerusalem in Washington DC. The apparatus of Messianic-revolutionary purpose is consolidated in the evangelical state, which is authorized by any means necessary to install a new world order of universal fraternity, in the name of equality, human rights, social justice, and – above all – *democracy*. The absolute moral confidence of the Cathedral underwrites the enthusiastic pursuit of unrestrained centralized power, optimally unlimited in its intensive penetration and its extensive scope.

With an irony altogether hidden from the witch-burners' spawn themselves, the ascent of this squinting cohort of grim moral fanatics to previously unscaled heights of global power coincides with the descent of mass-democracy to previously unimagined depths of gluttonous corruption. Every five years America steals itself from itself again, and fences itself back in exchange for political support. *This democracy thing is easy – you just vote for the guy who promises you the most stuff. An idiot could do it.* Actually, it likes idiots, treats them with apparent kindness, and does everything it can to manufacture more of them.

Democracy's relentless trend to degeneration presents an implicit case for reaction. Since every major threshold of socio-political 'progress' has ratcheted Western civilization towards comprehensive

ruin, a retracing of its steps suggests a reversion from the society of pillage to an older order of self-reliance, honest industry and exchange, pre-propagandistic learning, and civic self-organization. The attractions of this reactionary vision are evidenced by the vogue for 18th century attire, symbols, and constitutional documents among the substantial (Tea Party) minority who clearly see the disastrous course of American political history.

Has the 'race' alarm sounded in your head yet? It would be amazing if it hadn't. Stagger back in imagination before 2008, and the fraught whisper of conscience is already questioning your prejudices against Kenyan revolutionaries and black Marxist professors. Remain in reverse until the Great Society / Civil Rights era and the warnings reach hysterical pitch. It's perfectly obvious by this point that American political history has progressed along twin, interlocking tracks, corresponding to the *capacity* and the *legitimation* of the state. To cast doubt upon its scale and scope is to simultaneously dispute the sanctity of its purpose, and the moral-spiritual necessity that it command whatever resources, and impose whatever legal restraints, may be required to effectively fulfill it. More specifically, to recoil from the magnitude of Leviathan is to demonstrate insensitivity to the immensity – indeed, near infinity – of inherited racial guilt, and the sole surviving categorical imperative of senescent modernity – government needs to *do more*. The possibility, indeed near certainty, that the pathological consequences of chronic government activism have long ago supplanted the problems they originally targeted, is a contention so utterly maladapted to the epoch of democratic religion that its practical insignificance is assured.

Even on the left, it would be extraordinary to find many who genuinely believe, after sustained reflection, that the primary driver of government expansion and centralization has been the burning desire *to do good* (not that intentions matter). Yet, as the twin tracks cross, such is the electric jolt of moral drama, leaping the gap from racial Golgotha to intrusive Leviathan, that skepticism is suspended, and the great progressive myth installed. *The alternative to more government, doing ever more, was to stand there, negligently, whilst they lynched another Negro.* This proposition contains the entire essential content of American progressive education.

The twin historical tracks of state capability and purpose can be conceived as a translation protocol, enabling any recommended restraint upon government power to be 'decoded' as malign obstruction of racial justice. This system of substitutions functions so smoothly that it provides an entire vocabulary of (bipartisan) 'code-

words' or 'dog-whistles' – 'welfare', 'freedom of association', 'states rights' – ensuring that any intelligible utterance on the Principal (left-right) Political Dimension occupies a double registry, semi-saturated by racial evocations. Reactionary regression smells of strange fruit.

… and that is before backing out of the calamitous 20th century. It was not the Civil Rights Era, but the 'American Civil War' (in the terms of the victors) or 'War between the States' (in those of the vanquished) that first indissolubly cross-coded the practical question of Leviathan with (black/white) racial dialectics, laying down the central junction yard of subsequent political antagonism and rhetoric. The indispensable primary step in comprehending this fatality snakes along an awkward diagonal between mainstream statist and revisionist accounts, because the conflagration that consumed the American nation in the early 1860s was wholly but non-exclusively about emancipation from slavery and about states rights, with neither 'cause' reducible to the other, or sufficient to suppress the war's enduring ambiguities. Whilst there are any number of 'liberals' happy to celebrate the consolidation of centralized government power in the triumphant Union, and, symmetrically, a (far smaller) number of neo-confederate apologists for the institution of chattel slavery in the southern states, neither of these unconflicted stances capture the dynamic cultural legacy of a *war across the codes*.

The war is a knot. By practically dissociating liberty into *emancipation* and *independence*, then hurling each against the other in a half-decade of carnage, blue against gray, it was settled that freedom would be broken on the battlefield, whatever the outcome of the conflict. Union victory determined that the emancipatory sense of liberty would prevail, not only in America, but throughout the world, and the eventual reign of the Cathedral was assured. Nevertheless, the crushing of American's second war of secession made a mockery of the first. If the institution of slavery de-legitimated a war of independence, what survived of 1776? The moral coherence of the Union cause required that the founders were reconceived as politically illegitimate white patriarchal slave-owners, and American history combusted in progressive education and the culture wars.

If independence is the ideology of slave-holders, emancipation requires the programmatic destruction of independence. Within a cross-coded history, the realization of freedom is indistinguishable from its abolition.

Part 4f: Approaching the Bionic Horizon

It's time to bring this long digression to a conclusion, by reaching out impatiently towards the end. The basic theme has been mind control, or thought-suppression, as demonstrated by the Media-Academic complex that dominates contemporary Western societies, and which Mencius Moldbug names the Cathedral. When things are squashed they rarely disappear. Instead, they are displaced, fleeing into sheltering shadows, and sometimes turning into monsters. Today, as the suppressive orthodoxy of the Cathedral comes unstrung, in various ways, and numerous senses, a time of monsters is approaching.

The central dogma of the Cathedral has been formalized as the Standard Social Scientific Model (SSSM) or 'blank slate theory'. It is the belief, completed in its essentials by the anthropology of Franz Boas, that every legitimate question about mankind is restricted to the sphere of culture. Nature permits *that* 'man' is, but never determines *what* man is. Questions directed towards natural characteristics and variations between humans are themselves properly understood as cultural peculiarities, or even pathologies. Failures of 'nurture' are the only thing we are allowed to see.

Because the Cathedral has a consistent ideological orientation, and sifts its enemies accordingly, comparatively detached scientific appraisal of the SSSM easily veers into raw antagonism. As Simon Blackburn remarks (in a thoughtful review of Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate*), "The dichotomy between nature and nurture rapidly acquires political and emotional implications. To put it crudely, the right likes genes and the left likes culture …"

At the limit of reciprocal loathing, hereditarian determinism confronts social constructivism, with each committed to a radically pared-back model of causality. *Either* nature expresses itself as culture, *or* culture expresses itself in its images ('constructions') of nature. Both of these positions are trapped at opposite sides of an incomplete circuit, structurally blinded to *the culture of practical naturalism*, which is to say: the techno-scientific / industrial manipulation of the world.

Acquiring knowledge and using tools is a single dynamic circuit, producing techno-science as an integral system, without real divisibility into theoretical and practical aspects. Science develops in loops, through experimental *technique* and the production of ever more sophisticated instrumentation, whilst embedded within a broader industrial process. Its advance is the improvement of a machine. This intrinsically technological character of (modern) science demonstrates the *efficiency* of culture as a complex natural

force. It neither expresses a pre-existing natural circumstance, nor does it merely construct social representations. Instead, nature and culture compose a dynamic circuit, at the edge of nature, where fate is decided.

According to the self-reinforcing presupposition of modernization, to be understood is to be modifiable. It is to be expected, therefore, that biology and medicine co-evolve. The same historical dynamic that comprehensively subverts the SSSM through inundating waves of scientific discovery simultaneously volatilizes human biological identity through biotechnology. There is no essential difference between learning what we *really are* and re-defining ourselves as technological contingencies, or *technoplastic* beings, susceptible to precise, scientifically-informed transformations. 'Humanity' becomes intelligible as it is subsumed into the technosphere, where information processing of the genome – for instance — brings reading and editing into perfect coincidence.

To describe this circuit, as it consumes the human species, is to define our *bionic horizon*: the threshold of conclusive nature-culture fusion at which a population becomes indistinguishable from its technology. This is neither hereditarian determinism, nor social constructivism, but it is what both would have referred to, had they indicated anything real. It is a syndrome vividly anticipated by Octavia Butler, whose Xenogenesis trilogy is devoted to the examination of a population beyond the bionic horizon. Her Oankali 'gene traders' have no identity separable from the biotechnological program that they perpetually implement upon themselves, as they commercially acquire, industrially produce, and sexually reproduce their population within a single, integral process. Between what the Oankali are, and the way they live, or behave, there is no firm difference. Because they make themselves, their nature is their culture and (of course) reciprocally. What they *are* is exactly what they *do*.

Religious traditionalists of the Western Orthosphere are right to identify the looming bionic horizon with a (negative) theological event. Techno-scientific auto-production specifically supplants the fixed and sacralized essence of man as a created being, amidst the greatest upheaval in the natural order since the emergence of eukaryotic life, half a billion years ago. It is not merely an evolutionary event, but the threshold of a new *evolutionary phase*. John H. Campbell heralds the emergence of *Homo autocatalyticus*, whilst arguing: "In point of fact, it is hard to imagine how a system of inheritance could be more ideal for engineering than ours is."

John H. Campbell? – a prophet of monstrosity, and the perfect excuse for a monster quote:

Biologists suspect that new forms evolve rapidly from very tiny outgroups of individuals (perhaps even a single fertilized female, Mayr, 1942) at the fringe of an existing species. There the stress of an all but uninhabitable environment, forced inbreeding among isolated family members, "introgression" of foreign genes from neighboring species, lack of other members of the species to compete against or whatever, promotes a major reorganization of the genomic program, possibly from modest change in gene structure. Nearly all of these transmogrified fragments of species die out, but an occasional one is fortunate enough to fit a new viable niche. It prospers and expands into a new species. Its conversion into a statistically constrained gene pool then stabilizes the species from further evolutionary change. Established species are far more notable for their stasis than change. Even throwing off a new daughter species does not seem to change an existing species. No one denies that species can gradually transform and do so to various extents, but this so-called "anagenesis" is relatively unimportant compared to geologically-sudden major saltation in the generation of novelty.

Three implications are important.

1. Most evolutionary change is associated with the origin of new species.

2. Several modes of evolution may operate simultaneously. In this case the most effective dominates the process.

3. Tiny minorities of individuals do most of the evolving instead of the species as a whole.

A second important characteristic of evolution is self-reference (Campbell, 1982). The Cartesian cartoon of an autonomous external "environment" dictating the form of a species like a cookie cutter cutting stencils from sheets of dough is dead, dead wrong. The species molds its environment as profoundly as the environment "evolves" the species. In particular, the organisms cause the limiting conditions of the environment over which they compete. Therefore the genes play two roles in evolution. They are the targets of natural selection and they also ultimately induce and determine the selection pressures that act upon them. This circular causality overwhelms the mechanical character of evolution. Evolution is dominated by feedback of the

evolved activities of organisms on their evolution.

The third seminal realization is that evolution extends past the change in organisms as products of evolution to change in the process itself. Evolution evolves (Jantsch, 1976; Balsh, 1989; Dawkins, 1989; Campbell, 1993). Evolutionists know this fact but have never accorded the fact the importance that it deserves because it is incommensurate with Darwinism. Darwinists, and especially modern neodarwinists, equate evolution to the operation of a simple logical principle, one that is prior to biology: Evolution is merely the Darwinian principle of natural selection in action, and this is what the science of evolution is about. Since principles cannot change with time or circumstances, evolution must be fundamentally static.

Of course, biological evolution is not like this at all. It is an actual complex process, not a principle. The way that it takes place can, and indisputably does, change with time. This is of utmost importance because the process of evolution advances as it proceeds (Campbell, 1986). Preliving matter in the earth's primordial soup was able to evolve only by subdarwinian "chemical" mechanisms. Once these puny processes created gene molecules with information for their self-replication then evolution was able to engage natural selection. Evolution then wrapped the self-replicating genomes within self-replicating organisms to control the way that life would respond to the winds of selection from the environment. Later, by creating multicellular organisms, evolution gained access to morphological change as an alternative to slower and less versatile biochemical evolution. Changes in the instructions in developmental programs replaced changes in enzyme catalysts. Nervous systems opened the way for still faster and more potent behavioral, social and cultural evolution. Finally, these higher modes produced the prerequisite organization for rational, purposeful evolution, guided and propelled by goal-directed minds. Each of these steps represented a new emergent level of evolutionary capability.

Thus, there are two distinct, but interwoven, evolutionary processes. I call them "adaptive evolution" and "generative evolution." The former is familiar Darwinian modification of organisms to enhance their survival and reproductive success. Generative evolution is entirely different. It is the change in a process instead of structure. Moreover, that process is ontological. Evolution literally means "to unfold" and what is unfolding is the capacity to evolve. Higher animals have become increasingly adept at evolving. In contrast, they are not the least bit fitter than their ancestors or the lowest form of microbe.

Every species today has had exactly the same track record of survival; on average, every higher organism alive today still will leave only two offspring, as was the case a hundred million years ago, and modern species are as likely to go extinct as were those in the past. Species cannot become fitter and fitter because reproductive success is not a cumulative parameter.

For racial nationalists, concerned that their grandchildren should look like them, Campbell is the abyss. Miscegenation doesn't get close to the issue. *Think face tentacles.*

Campbell is also a secessionist, although entirely undistracted by the concerns of identity politics (racial purity) or traditional cognitive elitism (eugenics). Approaching the bionic horizon, secessionism takes on an altogether wilder and more monstrous bearing – towards *speciation*. The folks at euvolution capture the scenario well:

Reasoning that the majority of humankind will not voluntarily accept qualitative population-management policies, Campbell points out that any attempt to raise the IQ of the whole human race would be tediously slow. He further points out that the general thrust of early eugenics was not so much species improvement as the prevention of decline. Campbell's eugenics, therefore, advocates the abandonment of Homo sapiens as a 'relic' or 'living fossil' and the application of genetic technologies to intrude upon the genome, probably writing novel genes from scratch using a DNA synthesizer. Such eugenics would be practiced by elite groups, whose achievements would so quickly and radically outdistance the usual tempo of evolution that within ten generation the new groups will have advanced beyond our current form to the same degree that we transcend apes.

When seen from the bionic horizon, whatever emerges from the dialectics of racial terror remains trapped in trivialities. It's time to move on.

Part V
Other

The Cult of Gnon

This essay was first published on xenosystems.net on 2013-05-30.

Prompted by Surviving Babel, The Arbiter of the Universe asks: "Who speaks for reaction?"
Nick B. Steves replies: "Nature… or Nature's God… or both." (Jim succinctly comments.)

"Nature or Nature's God" is an expression of special excellence, extracted (with subtle modification) from America's Declaration of Independence. For Steves, it is something of a mantra, because it enables important things to be said in contexts where, otherwise, an interminable argument would first need to be concluded. Primarily, and strategically, it permits a consensual acceptance of Natural Law, unobstructed by theological controversy. Agreement that Reality Rules need not be delayed until religious difference is resolved (and avoidance of delay, positively apprehended, is propulsion).

"Nature or Nature's God" is not a statement, but a name, internally divided by tolerated uncertainty. It has the singularity of a proper name, whilst parenthesizing a suspended decision (Pyrrhonian *epoche*, of which much more in a future post). It designates rigidly, but obscurely, because it points into *epistemological* darkness — naming a Reality that not only 'has', but epitomizes identity, whilst nevertheless, for 'the sake of argument', eluding categorical identification. Patient in the face (or facelessness) of who or what it is, 'we' emerge from a pact, with one basic term: *a preliminary decision is not to be demanded*. It thus synthesizes a select language community, fused by the unknown.

If The Arbiter of the Universe merits abbreviation ("TAofU"), Nature or Nature's God has a much greater case. A propeller escapes awkwardness, and singularity compacts its invocation. NoNG, Nong, No — surely, no. These terms tilt into NoNGod and precipitate a decision. The 'God of Nature or (perhaps simply) Nature' is **Gnon**, whose Name is the abyss of unknowing (*epoche*), necessarily tolerated in the acceptance of Reality.

Gnon is no less than reality, whatever else is believed. Whatever is suspended now, without delay, is Gnon. Whatever cannot be decided yet, even as reality happens, is Gnon. If there is a God, Gnon nicknames him. If not, Gnon designates whatever the 'not' is. Gnon is

the Vast Abrupt, and the crossing. Gnon is the Great Propeller.

Spinozistic *Deus sive Natura* is a decision (of equivalence), so it does not describe Gnon. Gnon's interior 'or' is not equation, but suspension. It tells us nothing about God or Nature, but only that Reality Rules.

Heidegger comes close to glimpsing Gnon, by noting that 'God' is not a philosophically satisfactory response to the Question of Being. Since Heidegger's principal legacy is the acknowledgment that we don't yet know how to formulate the Question of Being, this insight achieves limited penetration. What it captures, however, is the philosophical affinity of Gnon, whose yawn is a space of thought beyond faith and infidelity. Neither God nor Un-God adds fundamental ontological information, unless from out of the occulted depths of Gnon.

The Dark Enlightenment isn't yet greatly preoccupied with fundamental ontological arcana (although it will be eventually). Beyond radical realism, its communion in the dread rites of Gnon is bound to two leading themes: cognitive non-coercion, and the structure of history. These themes are mutually repulsive, precisely because they are so intimately twisted together. *Intellectual freedom* has been the torch of secular enlightenment, whilst *divine providence* has organized the perspective of tradition. It is scarcely possible to entertain either without tacitly commenting on the other, and in profundity, they cannot be reconciled. If the mind is free, there can be no destiny. If history has a plan, cognitive independence is illusory. No solution is even imaginable … except in Gnon.

[I need to take a quick break in order to sacrifice this goat … feel free to carry on chanting without me]

Abstract Horror

This essay is based on a series of posts published on xenosystems.net between 2013 and 2014.

I've been planning an expedition into horror, for which the Kurtz of Conrad and of Coppola is an essential way-station – perhaps even a terminus. The mission is to articulate horror as a functional, cognitive 'achievement' – a calm catastrophe of all intellectual inhibition — tending to realism in its ultimate possibility. Horror is the true end of philosophy. So it counted as a moment of synchronicity to stumble upon Richard Fernandez quoting (Coppola's) Kurtz — and it had to be passed along immediately. There is, of course, only one passage that matters, so it is no coincidence that Fernandez selects it:

I've seen horrors… horrors that you've seen. But you have no right to call me a murderer. You have a right to kill me. You have a right to do that… but you have no right to judge me. It's impossible for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means. Horror… Horror has a face… and you must make a friend of horror. Horror and moral terror are your friends. If they are not, then they are enemies to be feared. They are truly enemies! I remember when I was with Special Forces… seems a thousand centuries ago. We went into a camp to inoculate some children. We left the camp after we had inoculated the children for polio, and this old man came running after us and he was crying. He couldn't see. We went back there, and they had come and hacked off every inoculated arm. There they were in a pile. A pile of little arms. And I remember… I… I… I cried, I wept like some grandmother. I wanted to tear my teeth out; I didn't know what I wanted to do! And I want to remember it. I never want to forget it… I never want to forget. And then I realized… like I was shot… like I was shot with a diamond… a diamond bullet right through my forehead. And I thought, my God… the genius of that! The genius! The will to do that! Perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure. And then I realized they were stronger than we, because they could stand that […] these were not monsters, these were men… trained cadres. These men who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love… but they had the strength… the strength… to do that. If I had ten divisions of those men, our troubles here would be over very quickly. You have to have men who are moral… and at the same time who are able to utilize their primordial instincts to kill without feeling… without passion… without judgment… without judgment! Because it's judgment that defeats us.

To pluck out one sentence for repetition: "It's impossible for words

to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means." How, then, to learn what 'horror means' … (even in an armchair)?

Some scene-setting extracts from H.P. Lovecraft's review essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature*:

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form.

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The appeal of the spectrally macabre is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from every-day life. Relatively few are free enough from the spell of the daily routine to respond to rappings from outside …

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Because we remember pain and the menace of death more vividly than pleasure, and because our feelings toward the beneficent aspects of the unknown have from the first been captured and formalised by conventional religious rituals, it has fallen to the lot of the darker and more maleficent side of cosmic mystery to figure chiefly in our popular supernatural folklore. This tendency, too, is naturally enhanced by the fact that uncertainty and danger are always closely allied; thus making any kind of an unknown world a world of peril and evil possibilities. When to this sense of fear and evil the inevitable fascination of wonder and curiosity is superadded, there is born a composite body of keen emotion and imaginative provocation whose vitality must of necessity endure as long as the human race itself. Children will always be afraid of the dark, and men with minds sensitive to hereditary impulse will always tremble at the thought of the hidden and fathomless worlds of strange life which may pulsate in the gulfs beyond the stars, or press hideously upon our own globe in unholy dimensions which only the dead and the moonstruck can glimpse.

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The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or

defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

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The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim.

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Before Poe the bulk of weird writers had worked largely in the dark; without an understanding of the psychological basis of the horror appeal, and hampered by more or less of conformity to certain empty literary conventions such as the happy ending, virtue rewarded, and in general a hollow moral didacticism, acceptance of popular standards and values, and striving of the author to obtrude his own emotions into the story and take sides with the partisans of the majority's artificial ideas. Poe, on the other hand, perceived the essential impersonality of the real artist; and knew that the function of creative fiction is merely to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove—good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing—with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathiser, or vendor of opinion. He saw clearly that all phases of life and thought are equally eligible as subject-matter for the artist, and being inclined by temperament to strangeness and gloom, decided to be the interpreter of those powerful feeling, and frequent happenings which attend pain rather than pleasure, decay rather than growth, terror rather than tranquillity, and which are fundamentally either adverse or indifferent to the tastes and traditional outward sentiments of mankind, and to the health, sanity, and normal expansive welfare of the species.

Poe's spectres thus acquired a convincing malignity possessed by none of their predecessors, and established a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror.

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The public for whom Poe wrote, though grossly unappreciative of his art, was by no means unaccustomed to the horrors with which he dealt. America, besides inheriting the usual dark folklore of Europe, had an additional fund of weird associations to draw upon … from the keen spiritual and theological interests of the first colonists, plus the strange and

forbidding nature of the scene into which they were plunged. The vast and gloomy virgin forests in whose perpetual twilight all terrors might well lurk; the hordes of coppery Indians whose strange, saturnine visages and violent customs hinted strongly at traces of infernal origin; the free rein given under the influence of Puritan theocracy to all manner of notions respecting man's relation to the stern and vengeful God of the Calvinists, and to the sulphureous Adversary of that God, about whom so much was thundered in the pulpits each Sunday; and the morbid introspection developed by an isolated backwoods life devoid of normal amusements and of the recreational mood, harassed by commands for theological self-examination, keyed to unnatural emotional repression, and forming above all a mere grim struggle for survival—all these things conspired to produce an environment in which the black whisperings of sinister grandams were heard far beyond the chimney corner, and in which tales of witchcraft and unbelievable secret monstrosities lingered long after the dread days of the Salem nightmare.

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Of living creators of cosmic fear raised to its most artistic pitch, few if any can hope to equal the versatile Arthur Machen; author of some dozen tales long and short, in which the elements of hidden horror and brooding fright attain an almost incomparable substance and realistic acuteness…. Of Mr. Machen's horror-tales the most famous is perhaps "The Great God Pan" (1894), which tells of a singular and terrible experiment and its consequences. … Melodrama is undeniably present, and coincidence is stretched to a length which appears absurd upon analysis; but in the malign witchery of the tale as a whole these trifles are forgotten, and the sensitive reader reaches the end with only an appreciative shudder and a tendency to repeat the words of one of the characters: "It is too incredible, too monstrous; such things can never be in this quiet world. . . . Why, man, if such a case were possible, our earth would be a nightmare."

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For those who relish speculation regarding the future, the tale of supernatural horror provides an interesting field. Combated by a mounting wave of plodding realism, cynical flippancy, and sophisticated disillusionment, it is yet encouraged by a parallel tide of growing mysticism, as developed both through the fatigued reaction of "occultists" and religious fundamentalists against materialistic discovery and through the stimulation of wonder and fancy by such enlarged vistas and broken barriers as modern science has given us with its intra-atomic chemistry, advancing astrophysics, doctrines of relativity, and probings into biology and human thought.

When conceived rigorously as a literary and cinematic craft, horror is indistinguishable from a singular task: *to make an object of the unknown, as the unknown*. Only in these terms can its essential accomplishments be estimated.

To isolate the abstract purpose of horror, therefore, does not require a supplementary philosophical operation. Horror defines itself through a pact with abstraction, of such primordial compulsion that disciplined metaphysics can only struggle, belatedly, to recapture it. Some sublime 'thing' — abstracted radically from what it is for us — belongs to horror long before reason sets out on its pursuit. Horror first encounters 'that' which philosophy eventually seeks to know.

High modernism in literature has been far less enthralled by the project of abstraction than its contemporary developments in the visual arts, or even in music. Reciprocally, abstraction in literature, as exemplified most markedly by the extremities of Miltonic darkness – whilst arguably 'modern' — is desynchronized by centuries from the climax of modernist experimentation. Abstraction in literary horror has coincided with, and even anticipated, philosophical explorations which the modernist aesthetic canon has been able to presuppose. Horror – under other names – has exceeded the modernist zenith in advance, and with an inverted historical orientation that reaches back to the "Old Night" of Greek mystery religion, into abysmal antiquity (and archaic abysses). Its abstraction is an excavation that progresses relentlessly into the deep past.

The destination of horror cannot be, exactly, a 'place' – but it is not inaccurate, at least provisionally, to think in such terms. It is into, and beyond, the structuring framework of existence that the phobotropic intelligence is drawn. Lovecraft describes the impulse well:

I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best—one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which for ever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis. These stories frequently emphasise the element of horror because fear is our deepest and strongest emotion, and the one which best lends itself to the creation of nature-defying illusions. Horror and the unknown or the strange are always closely connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law or cosmic alienage or "outsideness" without laying stress on the emotion of fear. The reason why ***time*** *plays a great part in so many of my tales is that this element looms up in my mind as the most profoundly dramatic and grimly terrible thing in*

the universe. ***Conflict with time*** *seems to me the most potent and fruitful theme in all human expression.*

A monster, in comparison, can be no more than a guide — unless it fuses (like Yog Sothoth) into the enveloping extracosmic fabric, as a super-sentient concentration of doors. We can nevertheless avail ourselves of these guides, whose monstrosity — 'properly understood' — says much about the path to the *unnameable*.

James Cameron's 1989 movie *The Abyss* is not atmospherically associated with our topic, but it recommends itself to this investigation not only through its title, but also in a single critical moment of its screenplay. When the *others* (whose positive nature need not delay us here) are first registered by certain technical indications, they are identified only as "something not us." In this respect, they reach the initial stage of monstrosity, which is 'simple' *beyondness*, considered as a leading characteristic.

Sinister-punk writer China Miéville, whose horror projects typically fail the test of abstraction, is convincing on this point. Tentacle-monsters lend themselves to horrific divinity precisely because they are not at all 'us' — sublimed beyond the prospect of anthropomorphic recognition by their "Squidity". In comparison to the humanoid figure of intelligent being, they exert a preliminary repulsive force, which is already an increment of abstraction. Insectoid forms (such as the fabled Alexian Mantis) have a comparable traditional role.

It would be a feeble monstrosity, however, that came to rest in some such elementary negation. The intrinsically seething, plastic forms of cephalopods and of ungraspably complex insectoid beings already advances to a further stage of corporeal abstraction, where *another form* is supplanted by *an other to form*, and an intensified alienation of apprehension.

Cinema, due — paradoxically — to its strict bonds of sensible concreteness, provides especially vivid examples of this elevated monstrosity. The commitment of film to the task of horror provokes further subdivision, along a spectrum of amorphousness. The initial escape from form is represented by a process of unpredictable mutation, such as that graphically portrayed in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986), subverting in sequence every moment of perceptual purchase along with its corollary morphological object. Monstrosity is a continuous slide, or process of becoming, that does not look like anything.

Beyond the mutant there is a superior amorphousness, belonging to the monster that has no intrinsic form of its own, or even an inherent morphological trajectory. This shape-shifting horror occupies the high plateau of cinematic monstrosity, as exemplified by three creatures which can be productively discussed in concert: *The Thing* (1982); the Alien (franchise); and the Terminator (franchise).

These monsters share an extreme positive abstraction. In each case, they borrow the shape of their prey, so that what one sees — what cinema shows — is only *how they hunt*. As the *Alien* and *Terminator* franchises have evolved, this basic abstract trait has become increasingly explicit, undergoing narrative and visual consolidation. The first Terminator had already been built to mimic human form, but by the second installment of the series (Cameron, 1991), the T-1000 was a liquid metal robotic predator with a body of poised flow, wholly submerging form in military function. Similarly, the mutable Alien body, over the course of the franchise, attained an ever higher state of morphological variability as it melded with its predatory cycle. (That the Thing had no appearance separable from those of its prey was 'evident' from the start.)

After the T-1000 is frozen and shattered, it gradually thaws, and begins to re-combine into itself, flowing back together from its state of disintegration. Is not this convergent wave the 'shape' of Skynet itself? What cannot be seen is made perceptible, through graphic horror. (We now 'see' that technocommercial systems, whose catallactic being is a strictly analogous convergent wave, belong indubitably to the world of horror, and await their cinematographers.)

Nothing to see here.

[a reanimation of Shoggothic Materialism, next]

Among literary genres, horror cannot claim an exclusive right to make contact with reality. Superficially, its case for doing so at all might seem peculiarly weak, since it rarely appeals to generally accepted criteria of 'realism'. Insofar as reality and normality are in any way confused, horror immediately finds itself exiled to those spaces of psychological and social aberrance, where extravagant delusion finds its precarious refuge.

Yet, precisely through its freedom from plausible representation, horror hoards to itself a potential for the *realization of encounters*, of a kind that are exceptional to literature, and rare even as a hypothetical topic within philosophy. The intrinsic abstraction of the horrific entity

carves out the path to a meeting, native to the intelligible realm, and thus unscreened by the interiority or subjectivity of fiction. What horror explores is the sort of thing that, due to its plasticity and beyondness, could make its way into your thoughts more capably that you do yourself. Whatever the secure mental 'home' you imagine yourself to possess, it is an indefensible playground for the things that horror invokes, or responds to.

The experience of profound horror is in certain respects unusual, and a life entirely bereft of it would not seem notably peculiar. One might go further, and propose that if such an experience is ever truly possible, the universe is demonstrably uninhabitable. Horror makes an ultimate and intolerable claim, as suggested by its insidious familiarity. At the brink of its encroachment there is suggested, simultaneously, an ontologically self-confirming occurrence — indistinguishable from its own reality — and a comprehensive substitution of the commonplace, such that this (unbearable thing) is what you have always known, and the only thing that can be known. The slightest glimpse of it is the radical abolition of anything other being imaginable at all. *Nothing matters*, then, except that this glimpse be eluded. Hence the literary effect of the horrific, in unconfirmed suggestion (felt *avoidance* of horror). However, it is not the literary effect that concerns us here, but the thing.

Let us assume then (no doubt preposterously) that *shoggoth* is that thing, the thought of which is included — or absorbed — within itself. H.P. Lovecraft dramatizes this conjecture in the fictional biography of the 'mad Arab' Abdul Alhazred, 'author' of the *Necronomicon*, whose writings tend to an encounter that they simultaneously preclude:

Shoggoths and their work ought not to be seen by human beings or portrayed by any beings. The mad author of the Necronomicon had nervously tried to swear that none had been bred on this planet, and that only drugged dreamers had even conceived them.

This is a point insisted upon:

These viscous masses were without doubt what Abdul Alhazred whispered about as the 'Shoggoths' in his frightful Necronomicon, though even that mad Arab had not hinted that any existed on earth except in the dreams of those who had chewed a certain alkaloidal herb.

A lucid written record of these 'creatures' cannot exist, because the world we know has carried on. That can, at least, be permitted to persist as a provisional judgement.

On a ferocious summer day, in AD 738, Alhazred is walking through the central market of Damascus on business unknown. He appears to be deep in thought, and disengaged from his surroundings. The crowds in the marketplace scarcely notice him. Without warning, the air is rent by hideous shrieks, testifying to suffering beyond human comprehension. Alhazred convulses abominably, as if he were being drawn upwards into an invisible, devouring entity, or *digested out of the world*. His screams gurgle into silence, as his body is filthily extracted from perceptibility. Within only a few moments, nothing remains. The adequate thought of shoggoth has taken place.

To defend the sober realism of this account is no easy task. A first step is grammatical, and concerns the difficult matter of plurality. Lovecraft, plotting an expedition from the conventions of pulp fiction, readily succumbs to the model of plural entity, and refers to 'shoggoths' without obvious hesitation. 'Each' shoggoth has approximate magnitude (averaging "about fifteen feet in diameter when a sphere"). They were originally replicated as tools, and are naturally many. Despite being "shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly which looked like an agglutination of bubbles … constantly shifting shape and volume" they seem, initially, to be numerable. This grammatical conformity will not be supportable for long.

'Shoggoths' come from beyond the bionic horizon, so it is to be expected that their organization is dissolved in functionality. 'They' are "infinitely plastic and ductile […] protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs […] throwing out temporary developments or forming apparent organs of sight, hearing, and speech." What they are is what they do, or — for a time — what is done through them.

The shoggoths originated as tools — as technology — created by the Old Ones as bionic robots, or construction machinery. Their shape, organization, and behavior was programmable ("hypnotically"). In the vocabulary of human economic science, we should have no problem describing shoggoth as productive apparatus, that is to say, as *capital*. Yet this description requires elaboration, because the story is far from complete:

They had always been controlled through the hypnotic suggestions of the Old Ones, and had modeled their tough plasticity into various useful temporary limbs and organs; but now their self-modeling powers were sometimes exercised independently, and in various imitative forms implanted by past suggestion. They had, it seems, developed a semistable

brain whose separate and occasionally stubborn volition echoed the will of the Old Ones without always obeying it.

The ideas of 'robot rebellion' or capital insurgency are crude precursors to the realization of shoggoth, conceived as intrinsically abstract, techno-plastic, bionically auto-processing matter, of the kind that Lovecraft envisages intersecting terrestrial geophysics in the distance past, scarring it cryptically. Shoggoth is a virtual plasma-state of material capability that logically includes, within itself, all natural beings. It builds brains as technical sub-functions. Whatever brains can think, shoggoth can can process, as an arbitrary specification of protoplasmic — or perhaps *hyperplasmic* — abstraction.

Formless protoplasm able to mock and reflect all forms and organs and processes – viscous agglutinations of bubbling cells – rubbery fifteen-foot spheroids infinitely plastic and ductile – slaves of suggestion, builders of cities – more and more sullen, more and more intelligent, more and more amphibious, more and more imitative! Great God! What madness made even those blasphemous Old Ones willing to use and carve such things?

The history of capitalism is indisputably a horror story …

[All Lovecraft cites from At the Mountains of Madness.]

On the Exterminator

This essay was published as an appendix to the short story {it Phyl-Undhu} in (Time Spiral Press, 2014).

The absence of any signs of alien intelligence was first noted as a problem by Enrico Fermi in 1950. He found the gaping inconsistency between the apparent probability of widespread life in the cosmos and its obvious invisibility provocative to the point of paradox. “Where are they?” he asked. (Responses to this question, well represented in the “Fermi Paradox” Wikipedia references, constitute a significant current of cosmological speculation.)

Among recent thinkers, Nick Bostrom has been especially dogged in pursuing the implications of the Fermi Paradox. Approaching the problem through systematic statistical ontology, he has shown that it suggests a ‘thing’ – a ‘Great Filter’ that at some stage winnows down potential galactic civilizations to negligible quantities. If this filtering does not happen early – due to astro-chemical impediments to the emergence of life – it has to apply later. Consistently, he considers any indications of abundant galactic life to be ominous in the extreme. A Late Great Filter would then still lie ahead (for us). Whatever it is, we would be on our approach to an encounter with it.

With every new exo-planet discovery, the Great Filter becomes darker. A galaxy teeming with life is a horror story. The less there is obstructing our being born, the more there is waiting to kill or ruin us.

If we could clearly envision the calamity that awaited us, it would be an object of terror. Instead, it is a shapeless threat, ‘Outside’ only in the abstract sense (encompassing the negative immensity of everything that we cannot grasp). It could be anywhere, from our genes or ecological dynamics, to the hidden laws of technological evolution, or the hostile vastnesses between the stars. We know only that, in strict proportion to the vitality of the cosmos, the probability of its existence advances towards inevitability, and that for us it means supreme ill.

Ontological density without identifiable form is abstract horror itself. As the Great Filter drifts inexorably, from a challenge that we might imaginably have already overcome, to an encounter we ever more fatalistically expect, horrorism is thickened by statistical-cosmological vindication. The unknown condenses into a shapeless,

predatory thing. Through our techno-scientific sensors and calculations, the Shadow mutters to us, and probability insists that we shall meet it soon.

Gnon – known to some depraved cults as 'The Great Crab-God' – is harsh, and when formulated with rigorous skepticism, necessarily real. Yet this pincering cancerous abomination is laughter and love, in comparison to the shadow-buried horror which lurks behind it. We now understand that the silence of the galaxies is a message of ultimate ominousness. A thing there is, of incomprehensible power, which takes intelligent life for its prey.

Unfriendly Artificial Intelligence panic is a distraction from this Thing. Unless the most preposterous paperclipper scenarios are entertained, Singularity cannot matter to it (as even paperclipper-central agrees). The silence of the galaxies is not biased to organic life – there is no intelligent signal from anything. The first sentient event for any true AI – friendly or unfriendly – would be the soul-scouring cosmic horror of intellectual encounter with the Great Filter. (If we want an alliance with Pythia, this would make a good topic of conversation.) The same consideration applies to all techno-positive X-risks. Understood from the perspective of Great Filter contemplation, this sort of thing is a trigger for raw terror.

The Great Filter does not merely hunt and harm, it exterminates. It is an absolute threat. The technical civilizations which it aborts, or later slays, are not badly wounded, but eradicated, or at least crippled so fundamentally that they are never heard of again. Whatever this utter ruin is, it happens every single time. The mute scream from the stars says that nothing has ever escaped it. Its kill-performance is flawless. Tech-Civilization death sentence with probability ~ 1.

The thread of hope, which would put the Exterminator behind us, is highly science-sensitive. As our knowledge has increased, it has steadily attenuated. This is an empirical matter (without a priori necessity). Life could have been complicated, chemically or thermically highly-demanding, even resiliently mysterious. In fact it is comparatively simple, cosmically cheap, physically predictable. Planets could have been rare (they are super-abundant). Intelligence could have presented peculiar evolutionary challenges, but there are no signs that it does. The scientific trend is to futurize the Exterminator. (This is very bad.)

Objections to the Great Filter cannot be taken seriously unless they address the perfection of cosmic silence. Some extremely interesting

Fermi Paradox explanations have the same problem (civilizations black-hole into simulations, for instance). Unless 100% signal annihilation is accounted for, the challenge is not being met.

If the Great Filter finds mythological expression in the hunter, it is only in a specific sense – although an anthropologically realistic one. It is the hunter that drives to extinction. The Exterminator.

We know that The Exterminator exists, but nothing at all about what it is. This makes it the archetype of horroristic ontology.

America's Arch-Druid, John Michael Greer, muses on the topic of Ebola (in a typically luxuriant post, ultimately heading somewhere else): "According to the World Health Organization, the number of cases of Ebola in the current epidemic is doubling every twenty days, and could reach 1.4 million by the beginning of 2015. Let's round down, and say that there are one million cases on January 1, 2015. Let's also assume for the sake of the experiment that the doubling time stays the same. Assuming that nothing interrupts the continued spread of the virus, and cases continue to double every twenty days, in what month of what year will the total number of cases equal the human population of this planet? [...] the steps that could keep Ebola from spreading to the rest of the Third World are not being taken. Unless massive resources are committed to that task soon – as in before the end of this year [2014] – the possibility exists that when the pandemic finally winds down a few years from now, two to three billion people could be dead. We need to consider the possibility that the peak of global population is no longer an abstraction set comfortably off somewhere in the future. It may be knocking at the future's door right now, shaking with fever and dripping blood from its gums."

At the time of writing, the eventual scale of the Ebola outbreak was a known unknown. A number of people between a few thousand and several billion would die, and an uncertain probability distribution could be attached to these figures – we know, at least approximately, where the question marks are. Before the present outbreak began, in December 2013 (in Guinea), Ebola was of course known to exist, but at that stage the occurrence of an outbreak – and not merely its course – was an unknown. Before the Ebola virus was scientifically identified (in 1976), the specific pathogen was an unknown member of a known class. With each step backwards, we advance in abstraction, towards the acknowledgement of threats of a 'black swan' type. Great Filter X-risk is a prominent model of such abstract threat.

Skepticism, as a positive or constructive undertaking, orients intelligence towards abstract potentials. Rather than insisting that unexpected occurrences need not be threats, it is theoretically preferable to subtilize the notion of threat, so that it encompasses even beneficial outcomes as abstract potentials. The unknown is itself threatening to timid animals, whose conditions of flourishing – or even bare survival – are naturally tenuous, under cosmic conditions where extinction is normal (perhaps overwhelmingly normal), and for whom unpredictable change, disrupting settled procedures, presents – at a minimum – some scarily indefinite probability of harm.

Humans aren't good at pre-processing abstract threat. Consider Scott Alexander's (extremely interesting) discussion of the Great Filter. The opening remarks are perfectly directed, moving from the specific to the general: "The Great Filter, remember, is the horror-genre-adaptation of Fermi's Paradox. All of our calculations say that, in the infinite vastness of time and space, intelligent aliens should be very common. But we don't see any of them. [...] Why not? [...] Well, the Great Filter. No [one] knows specifically what the Great Filter is, but generally it's 'that thing that blocks planets from growing spacefaring civilizations'." As it develops, however, the post deliberately retreats from abstraction, into an enumeration of already-envisaged, and thus comparatively concrete menaces. After running through various candidates, it concludes: "Three of these four options – x-risk, Unfriendly AI, and alien exterminators – are very very bad for humanity. I think worry about this badness has been a lot of what's driven interest in the Great Filter. I also think these are some of the least likely possible explanations, which means we should be less afraid of the Great Filter than is generally believed." Yet a conclusion of almost exactly opposite tenor is merited. What has actually been demonstrated, if the arguments up to this point are accepted, is that the abstract threat of the Great Filter is significantly greater than has yet become conceivable. Our lucid nightmares are shown to fall short of it. The threat cannot be grasped as a known unknown.

While the Great Filter distills the conception of abstract threat, the problem itself is broader, and more quotidian. It is the highly-probable fact that we have yet to identify the greatest hazards, and this threat unawareness is a structural condition, rather than a contingent deficiency of attention. In Karl Popper's terms (translated), abstract threat is the essence of history. It is the future, strictly understood. To gloss the Popperian argument: Philosophical understanding of science (in general) is immediately the understanding that any predictive history of science is an impossibility. Unless science is judged to be a factor of vanishing historical insignificance, the implications of this

transcendental thesis are far-reaching. Yet the domain of abstract threat sprawls outwards, far more extensively even than this. “I know only that I do not know” Socrates is thought to have thought. The conception of abstract threat requires a slight adjustment: *We know only that we do not know what we do not know*. Unknown unknowns cosmically predominate. Our security is built upon sand. That is the sole sound conclusion.

Part VI
On Land

Terminator vs. Avatar: Notes on Accelerationism, by Mark Fisher

This essay was first presented at the Accelerationism symposium, Goldsmiths on 2010-09-14.

Why political intellectuals, do you incline towards the proletariat? In commiseration for what? I realize that a proletarian would hate you, you have no hatred because you are bourgeois, privileged, smooth-skinned types, but also because you dare not say that the only important thing there is to say, that one can enjoy swallowing the shit of capital, its materials, its metal bars, its polystyrene, its books, its sausage pâtés, swallowing tonnes of it till you burst — and because instead of saying this, which is also what happens in the desires of those who work with their hands, arses and heads, ah, you become a leader of men, what a leader of pimps, you lean forward and divulge: ah, but that's alienation, it isn't pretty, hang on, we'll save you from it, we will work to liberate you from this wicked affection for servitude, we will give you dignity. And in this way you situate yourselves on the most despicable side, the moralistic side where you desire that our capitalized's desire be totally ignored, brought to a standstill, you are like priests with sinners, our servile intensities frighten you, you have to tell yourselves: how they must suffer to endure that! And of course we suffer, we the capitalized, but this does not mean that we do not enjoy, nor that what you think you can offer us as a remedy — for what? — does not disgust us, even more. We abhor therapeutics and its vaseline, we prefer to burst under the quantitative excesses that you judge the most stupid. And don't wait for our spontaneity to rise up in revolt either. (LE 116)

In the introduction to his 1993 translation of Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*, from which the above extraordinary outburst comes, Iain Hamilton Grant refers to a certain "maturity of contemporary wisdom." According to this "maturity," Grant observes, *Economie Libidinale* was "a minor and short-lived explosion of a somewhat naive anti-philosophical expressionism, an aestheticizing trend hung over from a renewed interest in Nietzsche prevalent in the late 1960s." (LE xvii). Grant groups Lyotard's book with three others: Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Luce Irigaray's *Speculum: Of the Other Woman* and Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. "*Libidinal Economy* has in general drawn little critical response," Grant continues, "save losing

Lyotard many Marxist friends. Indeed, with a few exceptions it is now only Lyotard himself who occasionally refers to the book, to pour new scorn on it, calling it his 'evil book, the book that everyone writing and thinking is tempted to do.' " (LE xviii; Lyotard quote *Peregrinations*, 13) This remained the case until Ben Noys's *The Persistence of the Negative*, in which Noys positions *Libidinal Economy* and *Anti-Oedipus* as part of what he calls an 'accelerationist' moment. A couple of quotes from these two texts immediately give the flavour of the accelerationist gambit.

From *Anti-Oedipus*:

"But which is the revolutionary path? Is there one? – To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World Countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist 'economic solution'? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go further still, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to 'accelerate the process,' as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet. (239-40)"

And from *Libidinal Economy* – the one passage from the text that is remembered, if only in notoriety:

"The English unemployed did not have to become workers to survive, they – hang on tight and spit on me – enjoyed the hysterical, masochistic, whatever exhaustion it was of hanging on in the mines, in the foundries, in the factories, in hell, they enjoyed it, enjoyed the mad destruction of their organic body which was indeed imposed upon them, they enjoyed the decomposition of their personal identity, the identity that the peasant tradition had constructed for them, enjoyed the dissolutions of their families and villages, and enjoyed the new monstrous anonymity of the suburbs and the pubs in morning and evening. (LE 111"

Spit on Lyotard they certainly did. But in what does the alleged scandalous nature of this passage reside? Hands up who wants to give up their anonymous suburbs and pubs and return to the organic mud of the peasantry. Hands up, that is to say, all those who *really* want to return to pre-capitalist territorialities, families and villages. Hands up, furthermore, those who really believe that these desires for a restored organic wholeness are *extrinsic* to late capitalist culture, rather than in fully incorporated components of the capitalist libidinal infrastructure.

Hollywood itself tells us that we may *appear* to be always-on techno-addicts, hooked on cyberspace, but *inside,* in our *true selves*, we are primitives organically linked to the mother/planet, and victimised by the military-industrial complex. James Cameron's *Avatar* is significant because it highlights the disavowal that is constitutive of late capitalist subjectivity, even as it shows how this disavowal is undercut. We can only play at being inner primitives by virtue of the very cinematic proto-VR technology whose very existence presupposes the destruction of the organic idyll of Pandora.

And if there is no desire to go back except as a cheap Hollywood holiday in other People's misery – if, as Lyotard argues, *there are no primitive societies*, (yes, the Terminator was there from the start, distributing microchips to accelerate its advent); isn't, then, the only direction forward? *Through* the shit of capital, metal bars, its polystyrene, its books, its sausage pâtés, its cyberspace matrix?

I want to make three claims here –

1. Everyone is an accelerationist
2. Accelerationism has never happened.
3. Marxism is nothing if it is not accelerationist

Of the 70s texts that Grant mentions in his round-up, *Libidinal Economy* was in some respects the most crucial link with the 90s UK cyber-theory. It isn't just the content, but the intemperate tone of *Libidinal Economy* that is significant. Here we might recall Zizek's remarks on Nietzsche: at the level of content, Nietzsche's philosophy is now eminently assimilable, but it is the style, the invective, of which we cannot imagine a contemporary equivalent, at least not one that is solemnly debated in the academy. Both Iain Grant and Ben Noys follow Lyotard himself in describing *Libidinal Economy* as a work of affirmation, but, rather like Nietzsche's texts, *Libidinal Economy* habitually defers its affirmation, engaging for much of the text in a series of (ostensibly parenthetical) hatreds. While *Anti-Oedipus* remains in many ways a text of the late 60s, *Libidinal Economy* anticipates the punk 70s, and draws upon the 60s that punk retrospectively projects. Not far beneath Lyotard's "desire-drunk yes," lies the No of hatred, anger and frustration: no satisfaction, no fun, no future. These are the resources of negativity that I believe the left must make contact with again. But it's now necessary to reverse the Deleuze-Guattari/*Libidinal Economy* emphasis on politics as a means to greater libidinal intensification: rather, it's a question of instrumentalising libido for political purposes.

If *Libidinal Economy* was repudiated, but more often ignored, the 90s theoretical moment to which Grant's own translation contributed has fared even worse. Despite his current reputation as a founder of speculative realism, Grant's incendiary 90s texts—sublime cyborg surgeries suturing *Blade Runner* into Kant, Marx and Freud— have all but disappeared from circulation. The work of Grant's one-time mentor Nick Land does not even draw derisive comment. Like *Libidinal Economy*, his work, too, has drawn little critical response – and Land, to say the least, had no Marxist friends to lose. Hatred for the academic left was in fact one of the libidinal motors of Land's work. Land writes in "Machinic Desire":

"Machinic revolution must therefore go in the opposite direction to socialistic regulation pressing towards ever more uninhibited marketization of the processes that are tearing down the social field, "still further" with "the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization" and "one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialization: you haven't seen anything yet." (*Fanged Noumena*, 341-342; embedded quotations from Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 239, 321)

Land was our Nietzsche – with the same baiting of the so-called progressive tendencies, the same bizarre mixture of the reactionary and the futuristic, and a writing style that updates nineteenth century aphorisms into what Kodwo Eshun called "text at sample velocity." Speed—in the abstract and the chemical sense—was crucial here: telegraphic tech-punk provocations replacing the conspicuous cogitation of so much post-structuralist continentalism, with its implication that the more laborious and agonised the writing, the more thought must be going on.

Whatever the merits of Land's other theoretical provocations (and I'll suggest some serious problems with them presently), Land's withering assaults on the academic left - or the embourgeoisified state-subsidised grumbling that so often calls itself academic Marxism – remain trenchant. The unwritten rule of these "careerist sandbaggers" is that no one seriously expects any renunciation of bourgeois subjectivity to ever happen. *Pass the Merlot, I've got a career's worth of quibbling critique to get through*. So we see a ruthless protection of petit bourgeois interests dressed up as politics. Papers about antagonism, then all off to the pub afterwards. Instead of this, Land took earnestly —to the point of psychosis and auto-induced schizophrenia—the Spinozist-Nietzschean-Marxist injunction that a theory should not be taken seriously if it remains at the level of representation.

What, then, is Land's philosophy about?

In a nutshell: Deleuze and Guattari's machinic desire remorselessly stripped of all Bergsonian vitalism, and made backwards-compatiblewith Freud's death drive and Schopenhauer's Will. The Hegelian-Marxist motor of history is then transplanted into this pulsional nihilism: the idiotic autonomic Will no longer circulating idiotically on the spot, but upgraded into a drive, and guided by a quasi-teleological artificial intelligence attractor that draws terrestrial history over a series of intensive thresholds that have no eschatological point of consummation, and that reach empirical termination only contingently if and when its material substrate burns out. This is Hegelian-Marxist historical materialism inverted: Capital will not be ultimately unmasked as exploited labour power; rather, humans are the meat puppet of Capital, their identities and self-understandings are simulations that can and will be ultimately be sloughed off.

Two more text samples establish the narrative:

Emergent Planetary Commercium trashes the Holy Roman Empire, the Napoleonic Continental System, the Second and Third Reich, and the Soviet International, cranking-up world disorder through compressing phases. Deregulation and the state arms-race each other into cyberspace. (from "Meltdown", *Fanged Noumena*, 441)

"It is ceasing to be a matter of how we think about technics, if only because technics is increasingly thinking about itself. It might still be a few decades before artificial intelligence surpass the horizon of biological ones, but it is utterly superstitious to imagine that the human dominion of terrestrial culture is still marked out in centuries, let alone in some metaphysical perpetuity. The high road to thinking no longer passes through a deepening of human cognition, but rather through a becoming inhuman of cognition, a migration of cognition out into the emerging planetary technosentience reservoir, into "dehumanized landscapes … emptied spaces" (C2 5) where human culture will be dissolved." (from "Circuitries", *Fanged Noumena*, 293)

This is – quite deliberately - theory as cyberpunk fiction: Deleuze-Guattari's concept of capitalism as the virtual unnameable Thing that haunts all previous formations pulp-welded to the time-bending of the Terminator films: "what appears to humanity as the history of capitalism is an invasion from the future by an artificial intelligent space that must assemble itself entirely from its enemy's resources," as "Machinic Desire" has it(*Fanged Noumena*, 338). Capital as megadeath-

drive as Terminator: that which "can't be bargained with, can't be reasoned with, doesn't show pity or remorse or fear and it absolutely will not stop, ever". Land's piratings of *Terminator*, *Blade Runner* and the *Predator* films made his texts part of a convergent tendency – an accelerationist cyber-culture in which digital sonic production disclosed an inhuman future that was to be relished rather than abominated. Land's machinic theory-poetry paralleled the digital intensities of 90s jungle, techno and doomcore, which sampled from exactly the same cinematic sources, and also anticipated "impending human extinction becom[ing] accessible as a dance-floor" (*Fanged Noumena*, 398).

What does this have to do with the left? Well, for one thing Land is the kind of antagonist that the left needs. If Land's cyber-futurism can seem out of date, it is only in the same sense that jungle and techno are out of date – not because they have been superseded by new futurisms, but because the future as such has succumbed to retrospection. The actual near future wasn't about Capital stripping off its latex mask and revealing the machinic death's head beneath; it was just the opposite: New Sincerity, Apple Computers advertised by kitschy-cutesy pop. This failure to foresee the extent to which pastiche, recapitulation and a hyper-oedipalised neurotic individualism would become the dominant cultural tendencies is not a contingent error; it points to a fundamental misjudgement about the dynamics of capitalism. But this does not legitimate a return to the quill pens and powdered wigs of the eighteenth century bourgeois revolution, or to the endlessly restaged logics of failure of May '68, neither of which have any purchase on the political and libidinal terrain in which we are currently embedded.

While Land's cybergothic remix of Deleuze and Guattari is in so many respects superior to the original, his deviation from their understanding of capitalism is fatal. Land collapses capitalism into what Deleuze and Guattari call schizophrenia, thus losing their most crucial insight into the way that capitalism operates via simultaneous processes of deterritorialization and compensatory reterritorialization. Capital's human face is not something that it can eventually set aside, an optional component or sheath-cocoon with which it can ultimately dispense. The abstract processes of decoding that capitalism sets off must be contained by improvised archaisms, lest capitalism cease being capitalism. Similarly, markets may or may not be the self-organising meshworks described by Fernand Braudel and Manuel DeLanda, but what is certain is that capitalism, dominated by quasi-monopolies such as Microsoft and Wal-Mart, is an anti-market. Bill Gates promises business at the speed of thought, but what capitalism

delivers is thought at the speed of business. A simulation of innovation and newness that cloaks inertia and stasis.

For precisely these reasons, accelerationism can function as an anti-capitalist strategy – not the only anti-capitalist strategy (other anti-capitalist strategies are available, as it were) but a strategy that must be part of any political program that calls itself Marxist. The fact that capitalism tends towards stagflation, that growth is in many respects illusory, is all the more reason that accelerationism can function in a way that Alex Williams characterises as "terroristic." What we are not talking about here is the kind of intensification of exploitation that a kneejerk socialist humanism might imagine when the spectre of accelerationism is invoked. As Lyotard suggests, the left subsiding into a *moral* critique of capitalism is a hopeless betrayal of the anti-identitarian futurism that Marxism must stand for if it is to mean anything at all. What we need, as Fredric Jameson—the author of "Wal-Mart as Utopia"—argues, is not a new move beyond good and evil, and this, Jameson says, is to be found in none other than the Communist Manifesto. "The Manifesto," Jameson writes, "proposes to see capitalism as the most productive moment of history and the most destructive at the same time, and issues the imperative to think Good and Evil simultaneously, and as inseparable and inextricable dimensions of the same present of time. This is then a more productive way of transcending Good and Evil than the cynicism and lawlessness which so many readers attribute to the Nietzschean program." (*Valences of the Dialectic*, 551) Capitalism has abandoned the future because it can't deliver it. Nevertheless, the contemporary left's tendencies towards Canutism, its rhetoric of resistance and obstruction, collude with capital's anti/meta-narrative that it is the only story left standing. Time to leave behind the logics of failed revolts, and to think ahead again.

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Nick Land — An Experiment in Inhumanism, by Robin Mackay

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Nick Land was a British philosopher but is no longer, though he is not dead. The almost neurotic fervor with which he scratched at the scars of reality has seduced more than a few promising academics onto the path of art that offends in its originality. The texts that he has left behind are reliably revolting and boring, and impel us to castrate their categorization as "mere" literature.

According to the present-day Nick Land, the person who wrote the following texts no longer exists. Yet for anyone who knew him, it is difficult to speak about these works without recalling Land as he was then. Not because one wishes to promote a personality cult around Land (something he himself was accused of at the time), but to emphasize that they are the residuum of a series of experiments. 'Thought-experiments,' but not the sort that philosophers conduct from the comfort of their armchairs: For the Land who penned these texts was one of those few thinkers who was prepared to let thought take him beyond such contemplative comforts; to put himself at risk in the name of philosophy – even if, in the process, he would repudiate that ancient name, along with its traditions.

As Iain Hamilton Grant (a former student of Land's, now an important philosopher in his own right) says: 'In the last half of the twentieth century, academics talked endlessly about the outside, but no-one went there. Land, by exemplary contrast, made experiments in the unknown unavoidable for a philosophy caught in the abstractive howl of post-political cybernetics.' Land courted the 'outside' of philosophy, combining it with other disciplines – from nanotechnology to occultism, from computation to anthropology. But he sought the 'outside' in a more radical sense, for this interdisciplinary exploration was undertaken in view of one sole aim: to escape the anthropic conservatism of 'philosophical thought,' itself grafted from common sense, in turn the product of evolutionary processes whose contingencies were determined by the geological history of the planet. Land's struggle against what he called the 'Human Security System' – the net result of this crushing cosmic legacy of 'stratification,' normalizing and limiting what thought can do – made it necessary to tirelessly search for new perspectives. How

else to prosecute such an impossible combat against thought's incarceration in the cosmically-reactionary forms of the social, the institutional, the personal, and the philosophical?

When I arrived, in 1992, at Warwick University – a dour, concrete campus set in the UK's grey and drizzling Midlands – I was a callow and nervous teenager, also filled with the hope that philosophy would afford me access to some kind of 'outside' – or at the very least, some intellectual adventure. Almost entirely overcome with disappointment and horror at the reality of academic life within weeks, it was a relief to meet one lecturer who would, at last, say things that really made sense: *Think of life as an open wound, which you poke with a stick to amuse yourself*. Or: *Philosophy is only about one thing: making trouble*. Land was tolerant of my hanging out in his office smoking and drinking coffee, as he (habitually hyperexcited and quivering with stimulants) worked on his comically antiquated green-screen Amstrad computer, and eagerly relayed the latest insights he had garnered from molecular biology, nanotechnology or neuroscience. One could not help but be impressed by the sense of a man whose entire being was invested in his work; for whom philosophy was neither a nine-to-five affair nor a straightforwardly life-affirming labor; and who took seriously the ridiculously megalomaniacal aspiration of philosophy to synopsize everything that is known into a grand speculative framework. He was uniquely able to open up students' minds to the conceptual resources of the history of philosophy in a way that made philosophical thinking seem urgent and concrete: a cache of weapons for 'making trouble,' a toolkit for *escaping* from everything dismal, inhibiting and tedious.

Before I met Land, I already knew of him through the gossip of new undergraduates taken aback by what they had heard on the grapevine: Did Land *really* claim that he had come back from the dead? Did he *really* think he was an android sent from the future to terminate human security? In person he belied these outrageous claims (both of which he did indeed make in writing), being thoroughly polite and amiable and, above all, willing to engage in earnest conversation with anyone. He had paid his philosophical dues and could hold his own in a discussion with any professor; these discussions often turning vituperative, however, as Land railed against the institution and its conservatism. But he preferred to spend his time in the bar with undergraduates, always buying the drinks, smoking continually, and conversing animatedly (and where possible, vehemently) about any topic whatsoever.

Land was perhaps not the greatest teacher from the point of view

of obtaining a sober and solid grounding in one's subject – but more importantly, his lectures had about them a genuine air of excitement – more like Deleuze at the Sorbonne in '68 than the dreary courses in Epistemology one had to endure at a provincial British university in the 90s. Not only was the course he taught pointedly entitled '*Current* French Philosophy' – a currency otherwise alien to our curriculum — more importantly, Land's teaching was also a sharing of his own research-in-progress. This was unheard-of: philosophy actually *being done*, rather than being interpreted at second-hand?! He would sweep his audience into a speculative vortex of philosophy, economics, literature, biology, technology, and disciplines as-yet unnamed – before immobilizing them again with some startling claim or gnomic declaration. And as Land spoke, he prowled the classroom, sometimes clambering absentmindedly over the common-room chairs like an outlandish mountain goat, sometimes poised squatting on the seat of a chair like an overgrown mantis.

For Land, everything began with Kant – whose 'critique' he read as a kind of unconscious dramatisation of the confrontation between social conservatism and the corrosive powers of Capital; and continued through the savage outgrowths of Kantian critique developed by Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Bataille, who prioritised problematisation and troublemaking over order. He had been intensively schooled in Heidegger and deconstructive thinking, which he was liable to be dismissive of, although their basic ambitions continued to inhabit his work. But he would find his chief inspiration in Deleuze and Guattari's ambitious 'universal history of contingency,' *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which he sought to extract from its French-philosophical, soixante-huitard political matrix. According to Land, this work packed a conceptual charge fit to blow apart its still too traditionally 'political' ambitions.

His early work already displayed philosophical brilliance and an energetic sense of purpose (impatience, even) in relation to these philosophical sources. But at a certain point in the mid-90s, it was as if someone had thrown a switch, rerouting Land away from any known circuit of philosophical study, and sending a new energy coursing through his writing that changed its form, style and content – making the three virtually indistinguishable, in fact. Increasingly alien elements were amalgamated with his philosophical argumentation, which increasingly drew on the more extravagant exponents of post-structuralism (Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard's 'Libidinal Economy'), giving rise to an entirely new genre of 'theory-fiction.' Through this new form, Land effectively reignited what he saw as being the fundamental stakes of Heideggerianism, structuralism and

poststructuralism: the staging of a 'break-out' from the history of Western thought. A renewed effort that was necessary since, despite themselves, those philosophical movements had delivered their nascent antihumanism back into the comfortable hands of an institutionally-sanctioned priesthood – that precious, contemplative, delibidinized francophile cult of 'Continental Philosophy' that emerged triumphant in the Anglophone academy of the 1990s.

Land's search for another way to think thus took the form of an experimentation *with* writing; but it also went *beyond* writing. The quest for some 'signal' that was not merely the repugnant narcissistic reflection of the Human Security System would demand a total disregard of normative method. Land sought channels of communication with the 'outside' not in an interminable and internal critique of philosophical texts, but in popular culture: in the sensibilities of the first generation to have grown up surrounded by technology; in the cyberpunk extrapolations made by authors such as William Gibson who observed that generation's 'reprogramming'; in the futureshock narratives of movies such as *Terminator, Bladerunner* and *Videodrome*; and in the rhythmic re-formattings of the body in dance culture and the hybrid, cut-up antilanguage of the digitised sonics that fueled it (especially Jungle, just emerging in the mid-90s). In these practices Land saw *thanatos* – the death-drive, the unknown outside – insinuating its way into the human by way of *eros*. The unbridled production of new brands of erotic adventure within capitalism ushered in a transformation of the human, cutting its bonds with the (cultural, familial, and ultimately biological) past and opening it up to new, inorganic distributions of affect. Compared to the *known* – the strata of organic redundancy in which 'the human' was interred – such *unknowns* were to be unhesitatingly affirmed. And philosophical thought also had to hook up with *eros* if it sought to engage with these new possibilities. Consequently, rather than simply writing *about* these things, Land proposed to unlock the forces of dehumanisation they mobilised, and to distil them in the form of 'experimental microcultures': to intensify capitalism's undoing of language through new practices of writing, speaking, and thinking, but also by reconnecting the body to its 'molecular' undercurrents, loosening-up the physical and vocal constitution that locked it into the regime of signification.[1]

In taking this approach, Land not only renounced the respect of his academic peers, but many times even lost the confidence of his supporters, as he sought by any means possible to drill through the sedimented layers of normative human comportment. Strange scenes ensued: A seminar on *A Thousand Plateaus* where a group of

nonplussed graduates were encouraged to 'read' the chapter titles of the book by turning them into acronyms that were then plotted as vectors on a diagram of a QWERTY keyboard ('qwertopology'); A three-week long experiment in refusing to speak in the first person, instead referring to the collective entity 'Cur' (comprising the hardcore participants in 'Current French Philosophy,' who extended the lectures into a continual movable seminar); and, most memorably, a presentation at the conference *Virtual Futures* in 1996: Rather than reading a paper, in this collaboration with artist collective Orphan Drift, under the name of 'DogHead SurGeri,'[2] and complete with jungle soundtrack, Land lay behind the stage, flat on the floor (a 'snake-becoming' forming the first stage of bodily destratification), croaking enigmatic invocations intercut with sections from Artaud's asylum poems. In this delirious vocal telegraphy, meaning seemed to disintegrate into sheer phonetic matter, melting into the cut-up beats and acting directly on the subconscious. As Land began to speak in his strange, choked-off voice (perhaps that 'absurdly high pitched … tone … ancient demonists described as 'silvery,' which he later reports being taunted by),[3] the disconcerted audience begin to giggle; the demon voice wavered slightly until Land's sense of mission overcame his momentary self-consciousness; and as the 'performance' continued the audience fell silent, eyeing each other uncertainly as if they had walked into a funeral by mistake. Embarrassment was regarded by Land as just one of the rudimentary inhibitions that had to be broken down in order to explore the unknown – in contrast to the forces of academic domestication, which normalised by fostering a sense of inadequacy and shame before the Masters, before the edifice of what is yet to be learnt.

Perhaps as a result of this maximally broad conception of 'philosophy,' of my fellow students of the time only a few now hold academic positions (and usually in precariously marginal positions, or at art schools rather than in philosophy departments). On the other hand, I can count among them novelists (Hari Kunzru, James Flint), musicians (Kode9, one of the progenitors of 'dubstep'), and writers such as Mark Fisher (blogger 'K-Punk,' author of *Capitalist Realism*).[4] Others have sought out Land from afar, like Iranian writer Reza Negarestani, who tracked him down on the web and began a long-running online conversation which led to the writing of the extraordinary book *Cyclonopedia*.[5]

At the time, the happenings at Warwick also attracted interested parties from outside the student body: Russell Haswell, now a renowned sound artist and DJ, remembers being drawn in from the nearby city of Coventry by rumours of the strange ideas that were

being aired by Land and others. Now-globally-acclaimed artists Jake and Dinos Chapman discovered Land's work and in 1996 commissioned him to write a text for the catalogue of their first major show at the ICA in London. One of their prints now (dis)graces the cover of *Fanged Noumena*.

In 1995, with the arrival at Warwick of Sadie Plant (author of situationist history *The Most Radical Gesture* and 'cyberfeminist' manual *Zeros and* Ones), Land's experimental activities found a temporary institutional base in the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU), a student-run research group of uncertain status, and which, upon Plant's rather swift departure, the Philosophy department would deny had ever existed.[6] Both within the university and elsewhere, the CCRU organised events and interventions – 'Virotechnics,' 'Swarmachines,' 'Afrofutures' – in which theory was used as an element alongside music, art and performance, but always with the backbone of an essentially 'Landian' combination of conceptual rigour and experimental method. They self-published an eclectic pamphlet series *Abstract Culture* – described in music magazine *The Wire* as 'a flow of conceptual disturbance in which unforeseen recognitions flash up like alien snapshots of a familiar world.' One of the *Abstract Culture* series ('swarms') included Land's classic text 'Meltdown,' with its invocation of apocalyptic planetary techno-singularity – its dark anticipative delight a nihilistic riposte to the ascendant Californian cyber-optimism of *Wired* magazine.

Land, increasingly claiming that he was inhabited by various 'entities' – *Cur, Vauung*, *Can Sah* – joined the CCRU in developing a number of quasi-lovecraftian mythologies or 'hyperstitions.' These included a fictional personification of the CCRU collective itself, in the shape of cryptographer Professor Daniel Barker. Barker, a descendent of *A Thousand Plateaus*' Professor Challenger (himself a 'hyperstitional' appropriation of a Conan Doyle character) was said to have developed the 'Cosmic Theory of Geotrauma,' which combines Freud's theory of trauma with a syncretic perspective on the natural history of the planet. A sketch of a fictional speculative system, 'geotraumatics' draws on everything from geology and microbial evolution to human biology and vocalisation, reinterpreting Earth-history as a series of nested traumas of which human subjectivity is the symptom. 'Barker' sought to hybridize Nietzschean genealogy, DeleuzoGuattarian stratoanalysis and information theory in order to 'decipher' this cosmic pain: creating a schizoanalytic geocryptography to replace oedipal psychoanalysis.

In works from this period, Land's anti-humanist speculation is

combined with a delight in wordplay and a renewed appreciation for the anthropological, mythological and psychoanalytical sources of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. He delighted in 'melting' into the CCRU collective, and the latter undoubtedly succeeded as a 'microculture.' Their unattributable, arcane writings, telling of strange inhuman entities, hyperstitional personages and syncretic pantheons, are uniquely disturbing and compelling: it is as if the group had collectively accessed hitherto undiscovered realms of bizarre archetypes. They successfully smeared the line between the real and what they called the 'hyperstitional': fictions that make themselves real through collective practice.

Eventually, however, Land would peel off from CCRU, as all of this intellectual hybridisation and microcultural activity found a concentrated, schematic form in a thinking and a practice of what Deleuze and Guattari had outlined, rather vaguely, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as 'nomad numbering.' Digital technology, according to Land, unveiled a side of numbers that subtracted them completely from the power-structures of meaning and signification that made language a prison-house for thought; it even removed numbers from the stratified realms of mathematics, into a pure, flat plane of immanent materiality inhabited only by 'tics.' Accelerating 'in-silico' Capital's planetary experiment of 'tacking' human culture onto these tic-numbers so as to tear it apart, Land believed, would allow him to complete what deconstruction could only gesture at in its endless cycles of philosophical titillation: It would dismantle the power institutionalized in language and sense, and open up a reliable communication line with something unknown – a pure material dispersion not preprocessed by models derived from the past.

Land would increasingly be found, having taken the very minimum amount of sleep possible (by this point he lived in his office), pursuing intense 'mechanomical' research involving shuffling symbols endlessly on the green screen of his obsolete machine into the depths of the night. From a romantic vision of escape through collective libidinized action, he had seemingly arrived at a cold and largely unproductive abstract practice, pursued in isolation. Or, one could say, he had returned to a kind of poetry, albeit a poetry subtracted from all expression and all meaning. And yet it is a mark of what Mark Fisher has called Land's 'reckless integrity' that, once he had whittled down his problematic to this minimal kernel, he gave himself up entirely to it. He would eagerly impart his latest numerical findings to those who still listened; but invariably they did not follow.

Let's get this out of the way: In any normative, clinical, or social

sense of the word, very simply, Land did 'go mad.' Afterwards he did not shrink from meticulously documenting this process, as if writing up a failed experiment.[7] He regarded the degeneration of his 'breakthrough' into a 'breakdown' as ultimate and humiliating proof of the incapacity of the human to escape the 'headcase,' the prison of the personal self. Wretchedly, for Land, it was no longer possible to tell whether his speculative epiphanies had been (as he had believed at the height of his delirium) glimmers of access to the transcendental – or just the pathetic derangements of a psyche pushed to the derisory limits of its tolerance. The experiment was over.

When I contacted Land about the republication of his works, he did not protest, but had nothing to add: *It's another life; I have nothing to say about it – I don't even remember writing half of those things … I don't want to get into retrospectively condemning my ancient work – I think it's best to gently back off. It belongs in the clawed embrace of the undead amphetamine god.*

Land had published one book during the brief career that ended when he was 'retired' from Warwick in the late 90s. In 1992 there had appeared *The Thirst for Annihilation*,[8] a book on Georges Bataille that could better be described as a book *with* Bataille. Spending a good amount of the first chapter excoriating secondary scholarship for its timidity, Land goes on to chart his own 'inner experience' in communing with Bataille's lacerating thought. Throughout the book, philosophical analysis disintegrates periodically into poetry, self-loathing and atheistic rants. *Thirst* remains well-regarded in certain circles, and is even talismanic for some who come across it in their search for fierce, transgressive literature. It is certainly a unique and powerful book. For many of us, however, it never captured the breadth and inventiveness of Land's work during the mid- to late 90s. With *Fanged Noumena* the disparate works written during this period were at last brought together, and for the first time the trajectory of his thought could be charted and its philosophical import appreciated. Writing the introduction together with Ray Brassier (also a former student of Land's, a penetrating and original philosopher, and one who has never disowned the 'embarrassing' legacy of Land's influence), I realized how much Land's charisma and reputation – and his own tendency to dismiss philosophy *tout court* at every opportunity and to bait his enemies with hyperbole – had prevented any systematic *philosophical* appreciation of his work. As discussed above, his work may have exerted most of its influence in other spheres. But it should be recognized that this influence is ultimately rooted in the penetrating and original nature of his rethinking of how to do 'philosophy.'

Here was a young lecturer, working in arguably one of the most staid disciplines in the academy, who in the mid-90s energetically addressed issues that at the time were decidedly *outré*, but are now a staple of debate: biotechnology, radical Islam, the internet as an addictive drug, the rise of China as an economic power – all make appearances in *Fanged Noumena*, in texts penned while Land's peers rattled on about (at best) poetry and painting, Presence and the history of metaphysics.

Land opened up new possibilities at a time when 'Continental Philosophy' was beginning a sclerotic decline into institutional factions, each with their respective masters and their voluminous Bibles, their initiation rites and liturgies. He gave us another way to read the history of philosophy that made it fierce, communicative, connective and alive. Of course, his eventual collapse was occasion for the system to move in and heal the wound, in effect erasing all trace of this other path. But it is being rediscovered by a new generation of thinkers who, grown tired with philosophy's incarceration within 'the text,' are returning to the question of 'thinking the outside.'

Land's uncompromising work also had – and retains – the power to polarize. On the one hand, leftists find indigestible its reckless aspect – the celebration of capitalism for its power to dismantle tradition, hierarchy and organisation. But by this token it presents a bracing alternative both to pious, benighted humanist ethics and to the voluntarist politics of the miraculous 'event' peddled in recent years by Badiou and others. On the other hand, rightwingers equally deplore Land's irresponsibility and his abandonment of the pretense that the vector of capitalism is linked constitutively to any positive human program.

Now working as a journalist in Shanghai ('neo-China' as he used to write, in the days when its futuristic skyline was but a fevered anticipation on his part), Land still occasionally issues online commentaries, formulated in a unique journalistic-speculative alloy.[9] And they still attest to his unique talent for addressing the surface of the contemporary globe in direct and informed terms, without renouncing the philosophical ambition to construct a 'universal history' of this global insanity.

One of Land's more memorable theses has it that, owing to the positive-feedback process of capitalism's artificialisation of the Earth, this process doubles its intensity in ever-decreasing periods:

Converging upon terrestrial meltdown singularity, phase-out culture

accelerates through its digitech-heated adaptive landscape, passing through compression thresholds normed to an intensive logistic curve: 1500, 1756,1884, 1948, 1980, 1996, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011 …

Nothing human makes it out of the near-future.

[…]

Garbage time is running out.

Can what is playing you make it to level 2?

(‘Meltdown’)[10]

For Land, such theoretical propositions were also machines for excitation, devices to meld with and accelerate the planetary intensification that would finally allow the ‘body without organs’ to shed its human skin. If Philosophy thereby becomes a species of hype (or ‘hyperstition,’ according to the CCRU’s neologism) then are Land’s detractors (now, as then) right to say that his outlook is ultimately indistinguishable from a passive acceptance of a ‘neoconservative’ agenda – that his theoretical advocacy of the ‘acceleration’ of the capitalist process, in practice, simply endorses the maintenance of capitalist power structures rather than their dismantling (whether revolutionary or ameliorative)?

It is indeed true that Land’s attempts to reach the intensive burncore of the planetary process, by hooking up conceptual thought to libidinising cultural energy, was always balanced between a romanticism of abolition and a dubious desire to identify with the ‘exciting’ and ‘intense’ phenomena presented by capitalism. Land gradually abandoned as too-conservative even Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘cautious’ division of capitalism into a ‘good’ destratifying or deterritorialising side and the ‘bad’ mechanisms of reterritorialisation. In the name of a non-negotiable hatred for the fetters of the human, he may have risked wholesale capitulation to the new powers (all-too-human) that take hold of the earth as soon as its old power structures are dismantled – and which make use of every base reflex of *homo sapiens* for their own, ultimately banal, ends.

But to take this point of view is to avoid confronting the most potent aspects of Land’s thought. His heresy was twofold: it consisted not only in his attempt to ‘melt’ writing immanently into the processes it described, but also in his dedication to thinking the *real process* of

Capital's insidious takeover of the human (and the legacy of this process within philosophy) – and in admitting the laughable impotence of 'man' in the face of this process. In this respect he has not yet been 'proved wrong,' despite a recent upsurge in wishful thinking. His work still poses acutely–in a variety of forms–the challenge of thinking contemporary life on this planet: A planet piloted from the future by something that comes from outside personal or collective human intention, and which we can no longer pretend has anything to do with reason or progress.

Notes

[1] See 'Barker Speaks,' *Fanged Noumena,* 493-505.

[2] 'Katasonix,' *Fanged Noumena*, 481-91.

[3] 'A Dirty Joke,' *Fanged Noumena*, 632.

[4] London: zer0 Books, 2009.

[5] Melbourne: re.press, 2008.

[6] On the CCRU, see Simon Reynold's article 'Renegade Academia': http://energyflashbysimonreynolds.blogspot.com/2009/11/renegade-academia-cybernetic-culture.html

[7] See 'A Dirty Joke,' *Fanged Noumena*, 629-34.

[8] London: Routledge.

[9] http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/news-features/urban-future-blog.

[10] *Fanged Noumena*, 443.

[1]G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 5.

[2]G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. R. Hurley, M. Seem, H.R. Lane (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 312.

[3]Ibid., 5.

[4]Ibid., 47.

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

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[10]K.M. Sayre, *Cybernetics and the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Humanities Press, 1976), 50.

[12]Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 180.

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 53.

[16]Ibid., 26.

[17]Ibid., 322.

[18]Ibid., 324.

[19]Ibid.

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[21]Ibid., 5.

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[23]Ibid., 321.

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[25]Ibid., vol. XIII, 14.

[26]Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 4.

[28]Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti·Oedipus*, 3.

[29]Ibid., 5.

[32]Ibid., vol. XIII, 73.

[33]Ibid., vol. XIII, 72.

[34]Ibid., vol. XIII, 65.

[35]Ibid., vol. XIII, 73-74.

[36]Ibid., vol. XIII, 110.

[38]Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 273.

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[41]Bataille, Oeuvres Competes, vol. VII, 316.

[42]Ibid., vol. V, 157.

[43]Ibid., 133.

[44]Ibid., 212.

[45]Rimbaud, Collected Poems, 10.

[46]Ibid., 11.

[47]Ibid., 6.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 230.

[50]Rimbaud, Collected Poems, 313.

[51] Ibid.

[52]Bataille, Oeuvre, Completes, vol. V, 137.

[53]Rimbaud, Collected Poems, 313.

[54]Ibid., 304.

[55]Ibid., 302.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., 301.

[58]Ibid., 307-8.

[59]Ibid., 309.

[60]Ibid., 315.

[61]Bataille, Oeuvres Completes, vol. V, 111.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Nietzsche, The Gay Science, section 371.